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VOL. XI.

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CHARLES C. LITTLE AND JAMES BROWN
1846.

Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1846, by
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LIFE

OF

STEPHEN DECATUR,

A COMMODORE IN THE NAVY OF THE UNITED STATES.

BY

ALEXANDER SLIDELL MACKENZIE, U. S. N.

PRO LIBERTATE ET PATRIA DULCE PERICULUM.

Decatur's Motto.

BOSTON:

CHARLES C. LITTLE AND JAMES BROWN.

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may angels watch over you &
protect you for your affectionate
Husband
Stephen Decatur

LIFE

OF

STEPHEN DECATUR.

PREFACE.

The printed materials used in preparing the following biography have been found in Waldron's Life of Decatur, the sketch of Decatur contained in the Analectic Magazine by Washington Irving, Goldsborough's Naval Chronicle, Clark's American Naval History, Harris's Life of Bainbridge, Brenton's English Naval History, newspapers of the time, and especially that invaluable repertory of official documents and contemporary history, Niles's Weekly Register.

Original information, derived from private sources, will, however, be found to constitute a large portion of the work. The writer is indebted to the nephews and nieces of Commodore Decatur, Lieutenant Stephen and Passed Midshipman John P. Decatur, and the daughters of his sister Mrs. M'Knight, and to Mr. F. B. Stockton, of the navy, connected by marriage with the Decatur family, for various particulars of family history; to Commodore Charles Stewart, Mr. J. K. Hamilton, and Mr. Francis Gurney Smith, for anecdotes of Decatur's early life; those from Mr. Smith having been obtained in personal inter-

views by Commander S. F. Dupont, to whom the writer is also indebted for unwearied efforts to collect information from the companions of Decatur's youth.

He is also under obligations to Commodores Stewart and Jacob Jones for incidents connected with Decatur's early service in the navy, in which they were his shipmates; to Mr. Thomas Hayes, representative of Commodore Barry, for dates and occurrences connected with Decatur's first cruise under Commodore Barry; to Commodore Stewart for incidents of the Tripolitan war; to Commodore Morris for many new details in relation to the burning of the Philadelphia, and the various attacks on Tripoli, illustrated by a map of the harbor, showing the position of the Philadelphia, the tracks of the Intrepid when inward and outward bound, the stations occupied by the Tripolitan gunboats, when attacked by ours, and the track followed by the squadron in passing the batteries during the different engagements; to the late Sailing Master, Salvadore Catalano, pilot of the Intrepid, for minute information concerning the capture of the Philadelphia, obligingly obtained in a personal interview by Lieutenant C. H. Davis; to Dr. W. P. C. Barton, for observations suggested by his service with Decatur on board the frigate United States; to Major Twiggs, Mr. Ogden Hoffman, and Mr. Lewis Leonori, for incidents connected with the capture of the frigate President; to Mr. Hoffman for

others connected with the Algerine war; to Commander Josiah Tatnall for an account of the capture of the Algerine frigate Mashouda; to Lieutenant Oscar Bullus for the use of his valuable collection of original letters from distinguished persons, embracing several from Decatur; to Dr. Bailey Washington for some of the circumstances connected with the closing scenes of Decatur's life. And finally, but chiefly, he is indebted to Mrs. Decatur, for placing at his disposal all the public papers of Commodore Decatur that remained in her possession, and for communicating whatever information was requested. In the obligations, which the writer is thus happy beforehand to acknowledge, the public will also share, if the following pages shall be found to throw new light on the services and character of a great national benefactor.

The painful incidents of the concluding portion of the work have been found not a little embarrassing in the narration. Some allowance may be made for the inherent difficulties of the task. The writer has earnestly endeavored so to acquit himself of the duty he owed, as a faithful biographer, to the illustrious dead, as to inflict no needless pain on the living.

He can at least claim to have sought truth diligently from every source within his reach; but the search for truth, however sincere, does not always result in its being found. Experience proves that contemporary history is quite as falli-

ble as that of the past. Various errors, which he has had occasion to rectify, on obtaining additional information, leave him without the hope that others may not yet remain. These, whether detected by the indulgent or the censorious, he will be happy to have an opportunity to correct.

An effort has been made to keep the text free from any thing extraneous; but matter of minor interest, and parallels that suggested themselves, have been occasionally thrown into notes, which may be passed unnoticed by the wearied or impatient reader.

TARRYTOWN, *April* 1, 1846.

STEPHEN DECATUR.

CHAPTER I.

Settlement of Decatur Family in America. — Birth of Stephen Decatur the elder. — Removal to Philadelphia. — He adopts the Profession of the Sea. — Birth of Stephen Decatur the younger. — Makes a Voyage with his Father for the Benefit of his Health. — Enters the Academy. — Youthful Sports and early Encounters. — Removal to the University of Pennsylvania. — Enters a Counting House. — Predilection for the Sea. — Builds miniature Ships.

The biography of a distinguished man has the twofold use of doing justice to his memory, by the faithful narration of his deeds, and of presenting a bright example to stimulate and guide others. Few Americans have been engaged in scenes so worthy to be commemorated, as the subject of this memoir; and there have been few the imitation of whose example as an officer could be more productive of public advantage. It would have been

a consoling assurance to the eminently patriotic heart of Decatur, to know that in this manner he might still, after death, be useful to that country, which, whilst living, he had so faithfully loved and served. If the following pages should accomplish this double service to Decatur and to his country, in a degree at all commensurate with the ardent wishes of the writer, he will not have wholly labored in vain.

The founder of the Decatur family, in this country, was the paternal grandfather of the subject of this memoir. He was a native of La Rochelle, in France, and, being directed by the maritime tastes of his native town towards a sea life, he entered the French navy at an early age. Soon after he had reached the rank of Lieutenant, the pursuit of his profession brought him to the West Indies. There he was attacked by the epidemic of the climate, and had well nigh lost his life. An immediate removal to a cooler latitude was deemed indispensable to restore his shattered constitution; and, as the readiest means of effecting this object, he obtained leave to proceed to the northern colonies, and accordingly embarked in a vessel bound to Newport, Rhode Island, where he landed about the middle of the last century.

The expectations, entertained by the friends of the young Frenchman, of the favorable effects of this change of climate, were so far verified, that he partially recovered his health, but, in the process of doing so, lost his heart irrecoverably to one of

those fair daughters of Newport, for whose beauty the town has ever been celebrated. The parents of the young lady, whose name was Priscilla Hill, properly reluctant to bestow their daughter on a stranger, could only be prevailed on to consent to the happiness of the young couple, by Decatur's agreeing to give up together his commission, his country, and his friends. This love readily accomplished.

Possessing no means of supporting a family, but what he could derive from his profession as a mariner, and no eligible employment offering at Newport, where the nautical tastes of the youth kept the avenues of preferment crowded, the young man removed to Philadelphia, in the hope of obtaining the command of a merchant vessel. But his constitution had never recovered from the shock of the tropical malady. He died soon after, leaving a widow in straitened circumstances, and an only son, Stephen Decatur the elder, born in Newport in 1751, and father of the subject of this memoir.

By such energy and exertions as maternal affection prompts, the widowed mother reared and trained her boy to virtue and usefulness, until, at an early age, he adopted his father's profession of the sea. Through the various gradations he rose simultaneously to manhood and command. On the breaking out of our revolutionary war, he obtained command of a small armed vessel, called the Royal Louis, and subsequently of the Fair American privateer, in both of which he cruised

successfully, and with great personal distinction, against the commerce of the enemy.

Imitating the paternal example, he married, at a very early age, a young lady named Pine, the daughter of Irish parents. The fruits of this marriage were one daughter, afterwards married to Captain James M'Knight, of the marine corps, who fell in a duel at Leghorn, and subsequently to Dr. Hurst, of Philadelphia, having children by both marriages; and three sons, who lived to manhood; Stephen, the subject of this memoir; James, who fell, as we shall see, before Tripoli; and John P., who has left three sons and three daughters. The names of two of the sons appear upon our present navy list, honorably sustaining there the name of Decatur.

When Philadelphia was occupied by the British army under Sir William Howe, the mother of Decatur removed to Sinepuxent, in Worcester county, on the eastern shore of Maryland, where Stephen was born, on the 5th of January, 1779. When he was a few months old, his mother returned to her home in Philadelphia, in which city or its neighborhood the family continued afterwards to reside. On the termination of the revolutionary war, the elder Decatur resumed his voyages in the merchant service in the employment of Messrs. Gurney and Smith, distinguished then, and long after, no less for their extensive dealings, than for their intelligence, enterprise, and probity. He became joint owner with them of

a fine ship, called the Pennsylvania, and afterwards of another, called the Ariel, which he himself commanded, making many voyages in them to Bourdeaux. At the early age of eight years, Stephen made a voyage with his father for the benefit of his health, which had been much debilitated by the whooping cough. His connection with the sea thus dated back to childhood.

The sea voyage having happily restored him from this malady, he grew up a lively, intelligent, and uncommonly promising boy, whose pleasing exterior contributed to enhance the effect of his excellent qualities of mind and character, rendering him attractive to his friends, and awakening for him in his parents cherished hopes of future distinction. His surviving contemporaries remember that, as a boy, he was frank and generous in his temper, giving utterance always to his thoughts and opinions, as they rose in his mind; in every scheme of boyish mischief or perilous adventure taking the lead; trusting to his fortune, and always going further than, rather than falling short of, whatever he had undertaken; impetuous without arrogance; having, on the contrary, a modesty and gentleness of demeanor, which accompanied him in advancing years, and in the maturity of his renown.

These traits of character are testified to by surviving companions and intimate friends of his youth, Mr. Francis Gurney Smith and Mr. J. K. Hamilton; and the latter gentleman has furnished

the writer with some incidents of his boyhood, interesting in themselves, and characteristic of his future bearing. Somers and Stewart, future companions of his renown, were among his schoolfellows at the academy in Fourth Street. The Quaker burying-ground was opposite the school, and thither Commodore Stewart mentions that the boys used to resort, to settle all the difficulties among them, which could not be adjusted without the arbitration of blows; a custom suggested, probably, rather by the proximity and convenience of the place, than with any view to a practical commentary on the peaceful tenets of the Friends who slept beneath. Stephen is said to have been by no means quarrelsome, and almost never angry; averse to give offence himself, and not prone to take it, unless it was evidently intended, and then he never stopped to consider the size or superiority of his assailant. If he saw another lad imposed on by one older or stronger than himself, Stephen always encouraged him to resist, and, if he could not protect himself, would adopt his quarrel as his own.

He is represented to have been amiable and good tempered, sprightly, joyous, full of mirth and spirit, and of the wit and fun which they inspire. He was an admirable mimic, and quick at repartee, as he always continued to be; but his humor was constantly controlled by good nature and chastened by good taste. He had a queer cognomen for every boy of his immediate circle

of associates, and that of Captain Dick, bestowed upon him in return, indicated the position he occupied among them as leader of their revels. In all their boyish exercises, he took the lead in agility and address. During the winter, when the glassy surface of the Schuylkill invited the boys to skim over it on the swift skates, no one excelled him in hurly, prisoner's base, and the other games of the season. In summer, his swimming excursions on the Delaware partook almost of the character of voyages. In the afternoons, he would frequently repair with his companions to Kensington, then the northern extremity of the city, and dash across the Delaware to the upper end of Windmill Island; and, circumnavigating it by swimming and wading along its eastern shore to its southern extremity, thence strike forth again into the broad stream, and, crossing it, make good their landing in a grove, below the present site of the navy yard, where the boy whom they had employed to take charge of their clothes at Kensington would meet them as they landed. On these excursions, Captain Dick was ever their expert file-leader.

When Decatur was about fourteen years old, he was returning, on a Saturday afternoon, in company with young Hamilton, from a fishing excursion to Hollander's Creek, which lies three or four miles below Philadelphia. As they approached his house in Front Street, near Cedar, Stephen saw his mother raising and consoling his

younger brother John, who, it appeared, had received a violent blow from a person of respectable family, but dissipated habits, upon whom the boy had played some childish prank, as boys are apt to do with tipsy people. The mother, in the same breath, soothed her son, and reproved his assailant for his unmanly conduct in striking a child. Instead of an apology, the man replied with abuse; and Stephen, having quickened his pace, approached to hear reviled that mother whose admirable qualities came in aid of natural affection to fix his enthusiastic reverence and love. Dropping his rod and basket on the pavement, he stood before the assailant, and said to him, "Do you know who that lady is, Sir? That is my mother; she must be treated with respect!" The man replied, that he neither knew nor cared who she was. Stephen then said to him, "If you have any complaint to make against my brother, Sir, make it to me." The infuriated man, giving way to his brutal passion, made a blow at Stephen, who, parrying it, struck back so vigorously, that his antagonist fell with violence on the pavement, and was seriously injured. Stephen's mother now, womanlike, directed her sympathy to the overthrown offender, and expressed to Stephen her sorrow for what had happened. Stephen replied, "Mother, you need not feel sorry, for he deserved it all."

Not long after this occurrence, Decatur was setting out on a fishing excursion to the same favorite

stream, with young Hamilton and other companions, and had reached the neighborhood of the Buck's Head Tavern, where they found a great crowd in the road, drawn together by a festive entertainment in honor of the minister of the French republic, by the members of a political party, who, in their outrageous zeal for France, and their desire that the United States should take part with her in the war, which she was waging against England, became more of Frenchmen than Americans. This they manifested by wearing the tricolor, and singing Jacobin songs. The father of Decatur supported the "father of his country." Whatever sympathies of ancestry may have bound him to France, his allegiance was yet due to the land of his birth. He was less a Frenchman than an American. Stephen naturally adopted the opinions of his father. He and his young companions had on the blue cockade of their country, which they habitually wore.

Some of the most furious of these pseudo-patriots, whose love of their own country only manifested itself through the medium of their Gallic predilections, now accosted Stephen as he was passing through the crowd, and insisted on his substituting the tricolor for his national cockade. He calmly refused, saying to those, who accosted him, that he did not interfere with their cockades, and claimed for himself the privilege of wearing that of his country. One of the most forward of

the patriots now made a dash at his cockade, to tear it away. Conscious of right, undismayed by the superior strength of his assailant, and the numbers at hand to assist him, Stephen gave him a blow. Young Hamilton and his other associates came to his assistance. A general fight ensued, and Stephen and his comrades were in a fair way to be overpowered and despoiled of their cockades, when a happy accident brought to his aid a party of his father's apprentices, stout young gentlemen sailors, who entered the strife with the true spirit of blue jackets, and bore their champion off severely beaten, but still triumphantly wearing his blue cockade.

After receiving the usual primary instruction at the Episcopal Academy, under the tuition of the Reverend Dr. Abercrombie, where Mr. Hamilton testifies to his creditable standing in all his classes, Stephen was transferred to the Pennsylvania University, where he continued for more than a year to prosecute his studies with diligence. But as he afterwards confessed to an intimate friend, his heart was no longer interested in these sedentary pursuits. He continued to study, but less from inclination than duty. He was already yearning to see the world, and enter on the active business of life. He grew impatient of quiescence and restraint, and longed to turn to account the active and manly vigor, which was already matured beyond his years. It was his wish to accompany his father in his voyages. But his father,

who had full experience of the hardships of a sea life, and whose fortune was ample, probably had other wishes as to the establishment of his eldest son; and his mother, feeling the common desire of mothers to keep him near her, and being tender-hearted, pious, and intellectual, having, moreover, favorite visions of her own, of future distinction for Stephen in gown and surplice, added her influence to divert him from his purpose of making the sea his profession. He, however, discontinued his studies at the university, which had become irksome to him, and entered the counting house of his father's associates in the ownership of the Ariel, Messrs. Gurney and Smith, of Philadelphia. This occurred in 1796, when he had completed the seventeenth year of his age.

He applied himself with intelligence and zeal to the discharge of the duties of his new station. But the manner in which he employed every leisure moment, left from the business of the desk, showed that his heart was still upon the ocean. Every unoccupied interval was devoted to the study of mathematics, in which he had been less proficient at the academy than in other branches, or in the drawing, construction, sparring and rigging of miniature ships. To gratify these tastes of young Decatur, and at the same time make them available in the service of their house, and the promotion of the public advantage, Messrs. Gurney and Smith, who were the agents of the navy in Philadelphia, now sent him into New

Jersey to superintend getting out the keel-pieces of the frigate United States, which was in process of construction at Philadelphia. Upon this duty he entered as upon a labor of love. He was afterwards launched in the United States, and may thus be said, not only to have laid the foundation, but assisted at the nativity, of that gallant old ship, which, in due time, we shall see him leading to victory.

CHAPTER II.

Establishment of the Navy. — Naval War with France. — Decatur appointed a Midshipman. — Cruise to the West Indies, in the Frigate United States. — Encounters a violent Gale. — Captures Privateers. — Decatur jumps overboard to save a Boy. — The United States cruises on the Coast. — Sails with Commissioners for France; thence to Lisbon. — Returns to the Delaware. — Decatur joins Brig Norfolk. — Cruises in the West India Seas. — Peace with France. — Reduction of the Navy.

Meantime the elder Decatur continued his voyages, until the spoliations of revolutionary France on our commerce made the seas unsafe for our merchant vessels, and led, in the early

part of the year 1798, to measures of reprisal on our part, and, as a first and necessary step, to the creation of a naval force.

We had at this time only three frigates, the Constitution, the United States, and the Constellation, together with a few small vessels for the protection of the revenue. Of our revolutionary navy nothing remained; the last ship left of it, the beautiful Alliance, which had been pronounced a perfect frigate by the high authority of French constructors and naval men, had been sold in 1785. In 1794, the spoliations of Algiers on our commerce, attended by the cruel enslavement of our seamen, had provoked an act of Congress "to provide a naval armament," authorizing the purchase or construction of four frigates of forty-four guns, and two of thirty-six, with the proviso, that, if peace with Algiers should be concluded before their completion, no further expenditure should be made. Before their completion, peace had been obtained by the payment of near a million of dollars in money and presents, among which was a fast-sailing frigate, which might hereafter be engaged in depredating on our commerce, and by stipulating to pay an annual tribute. The same sum would have completed the six frigates, and sent them forth to extort by force, at the cannon's mouth, what was granted to supplication and bribery.

But the latter expedient was preferred; and, peace being thus ingloriously obtained, President

Washington in vain urged the completion of the frigates, which might have been placed in the water for half the cost of the treaty. Congress could only be induced to authorize the completion of two of the forty-four, and one of the thirty-six gun frigates, the most advanced, aided by the sale of the perishable part of the materials collected for the whole number. Even the preliminary resolution, "that a naval force, adequate to the protection of the commerce of the United States against the Algerine corsairs, ought to be provided," had passed by a majority of only two voices.

It was urged, that the force was inadequate to the object; that older and more powerful nations bought the friendship of Algiers, and we might honorably imitate their example, or else subsidize some foreign naval power to protect us. These arguments, and the state of feeling that prompted them, are chiefly interesting now as affording a point of comparison, whereby to estimate our advancement in national spirit and pride; an advancement in no slight degree due to the character and deeds of the subject of this memoir. To the forbearance of the Congress of that day, in selling only three of the six frigates, which had been commenced, instead of the whole number, we owe the existence of the Constitution, the United States, and the Constellation, with all their associations of glory.

The predatory spoliations committed on our

commerce by revolutionary France, her capture of our ships in the prosecution of their lawful voyages, accompanied, in many cases, by barbarous treatment of the crews, and perpetrated not merely on the open ocean, but upon our own coasts, and even within our own waters, at length aroused the nation to a just and honorable spirit of resistance. As early as July, 1797, nearly three hundred and fifty of our merchant vessels were known to have been already captured and condemned. On the urgent recommendation of President Adams to provide a naval force for the protection of our extended and suffering commerce, Congress now appropriated money for the completion and equipment of the three frigates, and for augmenting the number of revenue cruisers; and subsequently to build or purchase and equip twelve vessels, to carry not more than twenty-two guns.

Finally, on the 28th of May, 1798, the President was authorized to direct the commanders of our cruisers to capture any armed French vessels, which had committed, or which might be found hovering on our coast with the intention of committing, depredations on our commerce. A subsequent act declared such captured vessels to be prizes; and our treaties with France were soon after solemnly annulled, on the ground of her having violated them. Further provision was soon after made for adding other vessels to the navy, until the whole force authorized amounted

to twelve frigates, twelve sloops of war, of from twenty to twenty-four guns, and six not exceeding eighteen guns, exclusive of the revenue cruisers.

Among the vessels thus introduced into the service was the Delaware, of twenty guns, the command of which was sought by the father of Decatur, who, on the breaking out of hostilities with France, had hastened to offer his services to his country. His well established character for energy, deliberation, and seamanlike skill, and the courage and resources which he had displayed in command of private armed vessels in the revolutionary war, led to the prompt acceptance of services, the offer of which was the more patriotic from his fortune being already sufficiently ample to admit of his retirement from active life. President Adams commissioned him as a post captain in the navy on the 11th of May, 1798. He was appointed at once to the command of the Delaware, and he put to sea in her, the month following, in company with the Constellation, Captain Thomas Truxtun, with orders to cruise along our coast to the southward of Cape Henry, and capture any French vessels that might be found molesting our commerce.

Off the entrance of Delaware Bay, the Delaware fell in with and captured the French privateer Le Croyable, of fourteen guns and seventy men. This was the first capture made during the French hostilities. The Croyable had cap-

tured several American merchant vessels, and was found on soundings ready to seize others. She was brought into Philadelphia by the Delaware, purchased by the government, and commissioned as a cruiser in the navy, under the name of Retaliation. She was sent to sea under command of Lieutenant William Bainbridge, from whom she was recaptured by the French.

On the 9th of July, Congress extended the authority to capture French armed vessels, so as to make them liable to capture wherever found, whether on our own coasts or on the high seas, and without reference to their having already committed depredations on our commerce. Under these instructions Captain Decatur prepared to put to sea, in company with Commodore John Barry, in the frigate United States. Stephen's predilection for the sea remained unabated. The wishes and entreaties of his mother had been hitherto successful in withdrawing him from pursuing the career of his choice. An opportunity was now offered to follow the double vocation of the sea and of arms. He entered warmly into his father's feelings of resentment against France, for the spoliations and indignities with which she had assailed our commerce. He had seen his father sail, and bring back in triumph the first of the enemy's cruisers that had been captured, and yet he had not accompanied him. His mother's entreaties had been successfully exerted

to restrain him from assisting in this triumph. Could he now behold the noble frigate, whose keel he had himself selected, as it grew in stately white oaks in the forest, in which he had been launched into the element which she has since ploughed with unequalled speed in every part of the world, and lit up with no common glory, depart without him?

Commodore Barry, observing the predilection and rare fitness of Stephen for the sea, of his own accord, without the request of Stephen or his father, so much deference had they for the wishes of Mrs. Decatur, obtained a warrant for him, dated back, with others, to the 30th of April, 1798. Stephen showed it to his mother, and she thenceforth withdrew her opposition. She lived to glory in the splendid offering, which she had thus laid on the altar of her country. But no incident of his life was more grateful to her maternal heart, or gave her more pleasure in the narration, than the object to which he devoted his first month's pay; to alleviate the wants of an aged and needy widow, of the name of Gordon, whose husband, a shipmaster, had been lost at sea, and who had been his first teacher in childhood. He had the good fortune to find two of his schoolmates already on board the United States, the present Commodore Charles Stewart, as fourth lieutenant, and Richard Somers, as midshipman, immediately senior to himself. Under

the worthy auspices of the veteran Barry, so distinguished for his revolutionary services, and then, and long after, the senior officer of the navy, Decatur now commenced his career, joining the United States late in May, immediately after receiving his warrant. He was then entering his twentieth year, well informed for his age, chivalrous in his temper, courteous and amiable in his deportment, and adding grace of manner to rare attractions of feature and person.

The age at which Decatur entered the service was an advanced one; but it could not have been earlier, being simultaneous with the creation of the navy. Between his appointment and putting to sea, he employed all his leisure from duty in studying navigation, under the instruction of a Mr. Talbot Hamilton, a former officer of the British navy, who kept an academy for that purpose in Lower Dublin, in the environs of Philadelphia. Whilst on shipboard, he was equally diligent in preparing himself to be useful. He went to work systematically to learn the uses of all the ropes, and where they were belayed; and, in order to aid his memory, and avoid the repetition of questions, he wrote the name of each rope behind the rail with his pencil. When the present honored veteran, Commodore Jacob Jones, subsequently joined the United States before her second cruise, Decatur, remembering the embarrassment, which the young officer feels, when endeavoring to make his first acquisitions in seamanship, kindly

suggested to his young friend the use of this expedient, which he adopted with advantage.

In the middle of July, Commodore Barry sailed in the United States, having the Delaware, Captain Decatur, in company, and stood to the eastward, having orders to join company off Cape Cod with the Herald, of eighteen guns, and then to cruise among the Windward West India Islands. When a few days out, a large sail was descried under French colors. Commodore Barry also hoisted French colors, in order to entice the stranger under his guns, and made signal to the Delaware to haul off, so as to leave him single handed to engage the enemy's ship. He then cleared for action, and bore down for close quarters. The action was about commencing when the stranger showed English colors, and, the United States also hoisting her proper flag, a collision was fortunately avoided. The stranger proved to be the Thetis, of fifty guns.

As the Herald was not to be seen off Cape Cod, Commodore Barry proceeded to Boston Bay, and anchored in Nantasket Roads. The Herald not being ready, he put to sea again, in company with the Delaware, and made a short cruise to the Windward West India Islands, returning to the Delaware in September, and ascending the river as far as New Castle. There the United States was partially recalked, and the rigging refitted. In November, she again sailed for a cruise on the coast. In the course of it, she was overtaken, whilst in the

Gulf Stream, by a gale of wind, which lasted nine days, and which, for its violence and duration, had, in the experience of the oldest seaman on board, never been equalled. Having, in the course of it, sprung her bowsprit, it became necessary, in order to save it and the masts, to bear up and scud for two entire days. The heated air of the Gulf Stream succeeding to the cool weather, in which the rigging had been set up, added to the violence, with which the ship rolled and lurched under the influence of a terrific sea, occasioned the rigging to slacken, so that it became valueless for the support of the masts, the loss of which appeared certain, and even that of the ship and crew was seriously apprehended.

In this critical situation, Lieutenant James Barron, the present Commodore, though only third in rank of the lieutenants of the United States, suggested to Commodore Barry the possibility of setting up the rigging, and thereby saving the masts, and offered to undertake the performance of this duty, the difficulty of which was of course greatly increased by the ship's being before the wind, and rolling unceasingly. Commodore Barry consented to the hazardous experiment being attempted, as it was evident that the masts could not stand much longer in the then condition of the rigging. Lieutenant Barron got the purchases on the shrouds, and succeeded in getting the rigging taught, and the lanyards secured without accident. The masts were thus saved, and

perhaps the ship also, through the skill and judgment of Lieutenant Barron.*

It was expedient, however, that the United States should make a port, to obtain a new bowsprit; and the ship entered the Chesapeake, and proceeded to Norfolk, where alone at that time a frigate's bowsprit could be replaced without delay. The ser-

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* Until science shall furnish us with an instrument to measure the intensity of gales, seamen will differ in opinion as to who has encountered the most violent one. That which the Macedonian encountered on the 26th of September, 1818, was, to judge from its effects, more violent than the one referred to in the text. Captain John Downes, who commanded, succeeded at last in saving her lower masts by a different expedient. He had sailed from Boston for the Pacific, very deeply laden with provisions and stores for a long cruise. The ship had been recently rebuilt, and the rigging was new. At sunset, the ship was on the starboard tack, under storm staysails, with her light yards down, topgallant masts housed, light sails out of the tops, her rigging well set up, and every thing stanch and strong. From this time, the gale freshened rapidly, until, at midnight, it blew a hurricane of appalling violence. Soon after midnight, our storm staysails, though new, were either split or blown away; our rigging, from the strain, and from the warm temperature of the Gulf, had become so slack, that, when she rolled to leeward, the lee rigging would hang off in curved lines, whilst the weather would tighten with a surge threatening to tear out the chain plates.

In the course of the night, all three of the lower masts were discovered to be sprung in several places. The braces had all parted, the rolling tackles were gone, and the yards were surging about with tremendous violence. The mizzen mast went by the board, carrying away the stern and lee quarter boat. No possibility remained of saving the fore and main masts but by cutting away the topmasts, a task of no little danger

vices rendered by Lieutenant Barron, on this occasion, having been represented by Commodore Barry to the government, with a recommendation that he should be promoted, he was at once raised to the rank of post captain, in which he remained in command of the United States.

So soon as the United States could be refitted, she again put to sea, and shaped her course for

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and difficulty. Two midshipmen, John Heron and Richard S. Pinckney, now Commander Pinckney, a quartermaster by the name of Collins, and a seaman named Thompson, volunteered their services for this hazardous undertaking. In ascending the weather rigging, they had to go up one rattling, whilst the ship rolled to windward, then grasp a shroud with arms and legs, to prevent their being jerked off to windward, when the shroud suddenly became taught again with intense force.

With stout bodies and stouter hearts, each carrying a sharp hatchet slung to the right wrist, they at length reached the futtock rigging, and, clinging there, cut away the lanyards of the weather topmast shrouds. The masts snapped off at the caps, taking with them the topsail yards, and hung suspended to leeward by the lee topmast rigging. As the wreck thrashed violently against the lower rigging, when the ship rolled to windward, to cut the lanyards of the lee topmast rigging became a task of even greater peril. It was, however, effected successfully by these gallant officers and men. Meantime the main yard parted its slings and lifts, and came down across the gangways, when a sea, soon after striking it, knocked away the starboard yard arm, stove the waist netting, and started the boats and booms stowed amid-ships. The fore yard was soon after cut away by Mr. Heron, and came down across the forecastle without being sprung.

Thus we lay with only our bowsprit and fore and main masts, and the wreck of the topmast beating against our side and bottom, until the rigging that held them could all be cut

the West India Islands, where the French cruisers, having quitted our coast, were now chiefly to be found, depredating on our commerce, which was much extended in the West India seas. Commodore Barry had command of that portion of our naval forces in these seas, which was appointed to cruise among the Windward Islands. Prince Rupert's Bay, in the Island of Dominica,

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adrift. Not a rag of canvass could be set. The loss of the mizzen mast occasioned the ship to fall off into the trough of the sea; to remedy which a fragment of the mizzen mast was slung with a bridle and kedge, and bent with a hawser led from one of the forward weather ports, and thrown overboard, to keep the ship by the wind. The expedient, however, did not avail us long, as the hawser soon parted. After this, to save the two remaining lower masts, which were still surging violently, capstan bars were lashed to the lower rigging, hawsers passed across from side to side, to swifter them in, and they were brought to the capstan and set taught.

Reflecting on these two occurrences at this distance of time, it does not seem possible that the Macedonian's masts could have been saved in the manner that those of the United States were. All our injury was received in a single night. The gale we experienced, being so much shorter, was probably more violent. The Macedonian, bound to a remote station on a three years' cruise, was doubtless more heavily laden. She had been a shorter time in commission than the United States, fewer days at sea, and her rigging less frequently set up, and less stretched down. Captain Downes, the first Lieutenant, Mr. John M. Maury, the other Lieutenants, and the Sailing Master, were seamen of approved skill. Both occurrences afford useful lessons, as to the peril of leaving our coast in the winter season with new rigging, and as to the importance of subjecting it to a heavy, long continued, and oft repeated strain in the rope and rigging lofts during warm weather, before being fitted.

was the principal rendezvous of his squadron. The United States also visited Barbadoes, Martinico, then in possession of the English, and St. Christopher's. Her officers were everywhere received with great kindness and hospitality.

But the greater portion of the time was employed in active cruising at sea, for the protection of our trade, and the annoyance of the enemy's cruisers. Whilst engaged in this service, the United States and Delaware, being in company, captured two French privateers, the Sanspareil, of sixteen, and the Jaloux, of fourteen guns. The Delaware, whilst cruising alone, subsequently captured the Marsouin, of ten guns; and the United States in like manner captured the Tartuffe, of eight guns, and L'Amour de la Patrie, of six guns. What part Decatur may have had in the performance of these minor but useful services to our commerce is unknown, beyond the following incident, communicated to the writer by Mr. Hamilton, as indicative of Decatur's aptness at repartee. Some additional particulars of the capture, to which it refers, have been obtained from a letter in a contemporary Philadelphia paper, probably written by Decatur.

On the 3d of February, 1799, the United States, whilst cruising to windward of Martinique, discovered and gave chase to the last of the above named privateers. The breeze was fresh, and the chase a long and exciting one, the United States gradually gaining on the enemy. At length the

French captain, as the only means of escape, went about, and boldly endeavored to turn to windward by short tacks under the guns of the frigate. A single well directed twenty-four pound shot from the United States went through her, between wind and water, and she quickly began to fill and settle. The lowering of her sails, the confusion on board of her, and the howl for succor that was put up by her crew, quickly revealed to Commodore Barry what had occurred.

The ship was promptly hove to, and the boats lowered and despatched to rescue the Frenchmen. Decatur was the first to reach the vicinity of the sinking vessel. He found her crew collected on her rails, stripped at once of their plunder and their clothes, and ready for a swim. They were plaintively imploring help, with earnest gesticulations, not only from men, but from God; in reference to which, the letter quaintly remarks, that, "although it is true they had abolished all religion, they had not, it seemed, forgot the old way of invoking the protection of the Omnipotent." Decatur saw, if he went alongside of the privateer, he could not take her whole crew, amounting to sixty, into his boat, though enough would probably rush in to swamp her. He ordered the crew of the privateer to put their helm up, and run down to the frigate, when all might be saved. They obeyed; so the privateer sunk quite near to the United States; the crew lept clear

of her; other boats were at hand, and all were saved. Decatur pulled in the captain, who, brushing the salt water out of his eyes, expressed a well feigned surprise at his being fired at by a vessel bearing the American flag. "Is that a ship of the United States?" said he, in broken English, to Decatur; for having cruised successfully against our commerce for four years, he had taken Americans enough to have a smattering of their language. "It is," replied Decatur. "I am very much astonished, Sir; I did not know the United States were at war with the French republic." "No, Sir; but you knew that the French republic was at war with the United States; that you were taking our merchant vessels every day, and crowding our countrymen into prison at Basseterre to die like sheep." The French Captain, being well aware of the truth of this last part of the proposition from his own experience, could not object to the practical inference that was deduced from it, but surrendered himself to capture with the best grace he could command. The droll mimicry with which Decatur related the conversation, occasioned it to dwell in the memory of Mr. Hamilton.

Desiring to relieve his ship of the presence of so many prisoners, and hoping to make them instrumental in giving liberty to an equal number of his fellow-citizens, among those who languished in the unwholesome dungeons of Guadaloupe, Commodore Barry now stood for that island,

and entered Basseterre roads with a white flag. When within effective range, the batteries opened a fire on him. Hauling down the signal of truce, he sailed round the harbor, returning the fire so energetically, as to leave traces of his bombardment years after on the walls of the batteries.

That Decatur performed his duty zealously, on these and other occasions, and favorably impressed his able commander, is evident from the fact of his having been promoted, on this cruise, to the rank of lieutenant, after the brief probation of a single year. That he also had an opportunity of exhibiting the chivalry, the prowess, and the active humanity, which characterized him, by an achievement out of the line of his duty, appears from the following record of the late Captain Robert T. Spence, whom we shall see hereafter himself performing an act of kindred gallantry under the eye of Decatur before Tripoli.

"The first time I had the pleasure of seeing this illustrious man was in the West Indies, during our differences with the French republic. He was then a lieutenant on board of one of our largest frigates, whose officers had been selected from among the most promising in the navy, and were, on the occasion to which I allude, generally on the quarter deck, grouped, as is the custom, in different places, conversing on the various subjects of their profession. I was introduced to many of them. They were pleas-

ing, gentlemanlike men, having the characteristic air and look of sailors. But in Decatur I was struck with a peculiarity of manner and appearance, calculated to rivet the eye and engross the attention. I had often pictured to myself the form and look of a hero, such as my favorite Homer had delineated; here I saw it imbodied.

"On being released from a kind of spell by which he had riveted my attention, I turned to the gentleman to whom I was indebted for the introduction, and inquired the character of Decatur. The inquiry was made of a person, to whose long experience and knowledge of human nature the inward man seemed to be unfolded. 'Sir,' said he, 'Decatur is an officer of uncommon character, of rare promise, a man of an age, one perhaps not equalled in a million!' 'A man overboard!' was now cried through the ship. 'Second cutters, away! third cutters, away!' was called from deck to deck. I observed Decatur to spring from the mizzen chains. I ran to the stern. In a few moments, I saw a youth upheld above the surging wave by a buoyant and vigorous swimmer, and thus sustained until released by the boats. Life had nearly fled; but it was not extinct. It was the life of one, who has since had celebrity, and lived to see his preserver the pride and glory of his country.

"It was under such circumstances I first saw the generous and chivalrous Decatur; a man more unique, more highly endowed, than any other I

ever knew ; to whom, perhaps, the country is most indebted for that naval renown, which is the admiration of the world ; a renown so associated with the name of Decatur, as to render them indissoluble."

Meantime, whilst fortune had furnished young Decatur no opportunity to signalize his courage against the enemies of his country, a scene had passed, in his near neighborhood, well suited to fire his spirit. On the 9th of February, 1799, Commodore Truxtun, in the Constellation, had fallen in with the French frigate Insurgent, off Nevis, and, after a well contested action of an hour and a quarter, in which the French ship had twenty-nine killed and forty-four wounded, had succeeded in capturing her. What would Decatur not have given to have seen his own brave ship, with her veteran leader, alongside of so worthy an antagonist !

Towards the close of the spring of 1799, the frigate United States being found to require extensive repairs, and the health of Commodore Barry having been impaired by the climate of the West Indies, he obtained permission from the navy department to return home with his ship. Having transferred the command of his squadron to Commodore Truxtun, he sailed for the Delaware, and anchored off Chester in June. Decatur, on the recommendation of Commodore Barry, was immediately commissioned by President Adams a lieutenant in the navy. Somers, who had been

also promoted by Commodore Barry, received his commission at the same time, and still remained next above him. Decatur had shortly before completed his twentieth year, and had been but a year in the navy, during part of which time he had already been performing the duty of lieutenant. No better evidence could be adduced of his entire devotion to his duty, and his rapid acquisition of professional knowledge, than that he should so soon have been deemed qualified to perform the responsible duties of a lieutenant by the veteran Barry. On Decatur's return, one of his earliest visits was to his aged widowed schoolmistress, to whom he brought from the West Indies a bag of coffee, and a barrel of sugar, doubly welcome, doubtless, from the considerate kindness that prompted a gift, which was long after remembered, and recounted by the grateful garrulity of old age.

Whilst the United States was undergoing repairs at Chester, Decatur, who was her fourth and junior lieutenant, was sent to Philadelphia to enter a new crew for her, the sailors being at that time entered but for a single year. Whilst engaged in this duty, some prime seamen, whom he had recruited, subsequently shipped on board of an Indiaman. Decatur took his shipping articles with him, and went on board of the Indiaman, to reclaim his men. The chief mate, being a very high spirited young fellow, was much vexed at parting with seamen, from whose services he

had expected much assistance in the performance of his arduous duties on a long voyage. He lost his temper, and permitted himself to use insulting language towards Decatur, and the service in which he was engaged. Decatur kept his temper, refrained from altercation, carried off the men, and subsequently related to his father what had occurred.

The elder Decatur, looking upon the affair as a military man, and in a view which custom and public opinion sanctioned, came to the conclusion, most painful to a father, that Stephen could not avoid calling the offender to an account. Stephen accordingly sent Somers to ask an apology for the unprovoked aggression. It was refused, and a challenge was sent and accepted.

Meantime Decatur had finished recruiting, and returned to his ship, which, having been refitted, had dropped down to New Castle, preparatory to sailing. The mate, too, deferring private business for the present, had gone on with his duties. His ship, being also ready for sea, came down to New Castle, and anchored near the United States. The mate now came on board of the frigate, and, asking for Lieutenant Decatur, told him he was ready to accept his invitation. Decatur immediately accompanied him on shore, but mentioned to Lieutenant Stewart, before he left the ship, that, as he presumed the young man was not expert in the use of arms, although he had offered him an insult wholly unprovoked, he

should carefully avoid taking his life, and would shoot him in the hip. They met; Somers being the friend of Decatur. Decatur wounded the young man where he had proposed, and remained unhurt himself. The anecdote is chiefly interesting as showing that, in this affair, in which he was the party aggrieved, and had sought redress with the advice of his father, he was influenced by the same merciful reluctance to take life in a private quarrel, which controlled him on another and more fatal occasion.

The United States being again ready for sea, and the health of Commodore Barry happily restored, he sailed in her, early in July, the ship being still commanded by Captain Barron, and cruised extensively along our coast, from Cape Cod to Georgia, for the protection of our commerce. Towards the close of July, the United States arrived off Charleston, in company with the frigate George Washington, having on board artillerists, whom they had brought from Boston, to garrison Fort Moultrie. Thence the United States proceeded to Norfolk, to replace her bowsprit, and sailed again from Hampton Roads in company with the Insurgent, on the 14th of August. On the 12th of September, Commodore Barry put into Newport.

There orders reached him to await the arrival of our newly appointed envoys to the French republic, Messrs. Ellsworth and Davie, and transport them to France, where the achievements of

Truxtun, and our other naval commanders, had prepared for them a better reception than had been extended to their predecessors. This pacific measure, which brought some reproach on the government, had only been adopted on the assurance of Talleyrand, the French minister of foreign affairs, that our envoys would now be received with due respect and consideration.

These gentlemen embarked on board the United States, on the 3d of December, and she shaped her course for Lisbon, where they desired to obtain more recent information of the temper of the French government before presenting themselves. The intelligence received at Lisbon proving satisfactory, the United States put to sea again with the envoys, with the intention of disembarking them at L'Orient. But the ship encountered a succession of heavy easterly gales, which drove her out of the Bay of Biscay into the British Channel, and subsequently into the neighborhood of Cape Clear. They spoke an *English slaver*, which had made the coast of Ireland the day before.

By this time, the diplomatists and their suite were worn out with suffering and anxiety. They requested Commodore Barry to abandon the effort to reach a French port. He accordingly bore up for Corunna, where the commissioners disembarked in February, 1800, and proceeded by land on their mission. After refitting the ship, refreshing the crew, and receiving the return despatches of the ministers from Paris, Commodore Barry sailed from

Corunna on the 15th of March, and arrived off Chester, in the Delaware, on the 15th of April. The United States had been so much racked in contending with adverse gales in the Bay of Biscay, as to be in a very unseaworthy condition. She had been built, in a great measure, of unseasoned timber, and, on inspection, it was found that her exterior planking, from the water's edge to the hammock rails, had scarcely anywhere the depth of one inch of sound wood, which had been preserved from decay by exposure to the air and by the paint. This being ascertained, she was taken further up the Delaware, to Marcus' Hook, and dismantled, preparatory to undergoing extensive repairs.

A few days before the arrival of the United States, Decatur's father had sailed from the Delaware, in command of the beautiful new frigate Philadelphia, which had been built by the citizens of the place whose name she bore, at their own cost, and presented to the government, with the request that she might be given to Captain Decatur. Messrs. Gurney and Smith had been prominent leaders in this act of patriotic liberality. We shall see, in the sequel, this ship, which thus commenced her career under the command of the elder Decatur, when misfortune had thrown her into the hands of an enemy, gloriously terminating it by the heroic act of his son. Captain Decatur proceeded in the Philadelphia to the station off Guadaloupe, and, by the return of Commodore Truxtun

to the United States, found himself temporarily in the command of a squadron of thirteen vessels. In the course of his cruising, he captured the Levarette privateer, of six guns.

During the absence of Decatur, in the United States, on her peaceful errand to Europe, Commodore Truxtun, who had previously rendered the Constellation renowned by the capture of the French frigate Insurgent, of superior force, had added another and more brilliant laurel to our naval wreath, by his desperate action with the fifty gun ship La Vengeance. This occurrence made Decatur eager to be again in the scene of these achievements. Dreading the months of inactivity which the repairs of the United States would occasion, he sought and obtained a transfer from her to the United States brig Norfolk, of eighteen guns, Commander Thomas Calvert. In this brig he sailed for the St. Domingo station, towards the close of May, after little more than a month's respite from cruising. After an active but unsuccessful cruise, which had been extended to the Spanish Main, the Norfolk returned home.

He now found that the repairs of the United States had been completed, and the ship was preparing to sail again for the West Indies under Commodore Barry, who was to reassume the chief command there. Hitherto fortune, which had been so liberal to Truxtun and his brave followers in opportunities for distinction, had furnished Decatur with no occasion to display his zeal and

courage against the enemies of his country. The revolutionary services of Commodore Barry were a pledge, that he only needed the good fortune, which had twice brought Truxtun into contact with a worthy enemy, to reap equally brilliant laurels for himself and his associates. With these hopes, and with the ready concurrence of Commodore Barry, Decatur now gladly returned from the Norfolk to his old station on board the United States. He sailed in her for Guadaloupe, in December, 1800. Soon after his arrival on this field of distinction, all present hope of achieving it was dispersed by the conclusion of peace.

Our display of national spirit, however tardy, and the naval enterprise to which it had given outlet and direction, had wrought a great change in the sentiments of the French government towards us. That government itself, in passing through the various stages of anarchy, in her progress towards a military despotism, had begun to acknowledge some of the obligations of public law, and at least to appreciate the policy of decorum. It was on the faith of assurances from Talleyrand, the French minister of foreign affairs, that the new plenipotentiaries had been sent out in the United States, in October of 1799, and, aided by a change in the government of France, of which Bonaparte had now assumed the reins as First Consul, they succeeded in their mission.

The spoliations, which prolonged submission would have continued until they ceased to be

profitable by the extinction of our commerce, and which the protection of our trade by a naval force and active retaliation had suspended, were now arrested by a treaty, which guarantied future security. It may be a profitable reflection to consider that whilst we had adopted, however reluctantly, the most honorable means of redress, in creating a navy, and sending it out to defend our commerce and retaliate on its depredators, we had chosen also the most economical one.

It appears, from the accounts published in Goldsborough's Naval Chronicle, that the whole cost of our navy from 1794, when the six frigates were authorized, of which only three were completed, down to the close of the war, early in 1801, including all the expense of building and purchasing ships, arming, equipping, and maintaining them in active service, together also with the expenditures, under an act of Congress of February, 1799, for constructing six seventy-four gun ships, the purchase of ground for six navy yards, and the improvements made on them, amounted but to ten millions of dollars. Deducting from this sum the value of what remained at the close of the war, Mr. Goldsborough estimates the actual cost of our naval protection, during its continuance, at six millions.

This protection enabled us to export our own and foreign products to the amount of more than two hundred millions, receiving in return the products of other countries to a greater amount,

on which the government was able to collect a revenue in duties of more than twenty-three millions. The very act of sending out our ships of war is said to have reduced the rates of insurance, on our merchant vessels, from seventeen, and even twenty per cent, to from ten to twelve; making an annual saving of risk, on the value of our shipping and their cargoes, of eight millions of dollars, and half that sum annually in our revenue from customs, which, without the protection of a navy, must have been well nigh annihilated.

The treaty with France having been ratified by the Senate on the 3d of February, 1801, and promulgated by the President on the 23d of the same month, Captain C. C. Russel was sent with the Herald to the West India seas, to order all our cruisers home. Meantime, before our ships could reach the United States, or their officers even learn that the war in which they had been employed in defending their country had terminated, Congress had hastened to direct the sale of the whole navy, with the exception of thirteen ships, and all but six of these thirteen, thus retained, to be dismantled. It also directed the President to discharge from the service all but nine of the twenty-eight captains, the whole of the commanders without reservation, and all but thirty-six, out of one hundred and ten, lieutenants. This act imposed on the President a most embarrassing and painful duty.

That part of it, which directed the discharge of

all the commanders, was easy to be executed; but to select from the twenty-eight captains only nine, where so many more than nine had served their country with distinction, and from the one hundred and ten lieutenants to select only thirty-six to be retained in the service, and to turn the rest forth upon the world, discredited if not dishonored, to begin life anew, was a task the most painful that could be imposed on a man of delicacy, justice, and humanity.

The various biographies of Decatur mention, that his father resigned his commission on the termination of the war, and retired to his residence at Mount Airy, in Byberry township, about ten miles from Philadelphia. He subsequently returned to Philadelphia, where he resided in Front, near South Street, and became engaged in mercantile business with his old associates, Messrs. Gurney and Smith. Some years later, he purchased a farm near Frankford, in Pennsylvania, and established gunpowder works. There he continued afterwards to live honored and respected until his decease.

It is not known whether the elder Decatur had or had not the choice of remaining in the service, which he had so greatly contributed to adorn, or whether the nice sense of delicacy, characteristic both of him and his children, impelled him to anticipate a removal, which must of necessity be the fortune of so many honorable officers. He had at least the satisfaction of seeing his son Stephen

remain as a lieutenant, and his son James as a midshipman, in the navy, to add to its renown, and render the name of Decatur immortal.

CHAPTER III.

War with Tripoli. — Squadron sent to the Mediterranean under Commodore Dale. — Decatur sails in the Essex. — She returns home. — Decatur sails again for the Mediterranean in the New York. — Difficulty at Malta. — Decatur returns home in the Chesapeake. — Appointed to command the Brig Argus. — Goes to the Mediterranean. — Is removed to the Schooner Enterprise. — Loss of the Philadelphia. — Decatur offers to destroy her. — Returns to Syracuse. — Amusements and Adventures at Syracuse.

The business of selling the greater part of the ships of the navy, dismantling most of those that were retained, and discharging the officers and crews, was scarcely completed before our government found itself involved in a new war with the regency of Tripoli. The Bashaw of that state had no complaint to make of want of fidelity on our part in the fulfilment of our engagements, as the tribute which our treaty bound us to pay him had been duly forthcoming. But he felt himself

slighted and aggrieved, because we had given a frigate to the Dey of Algiers, whilst he had received none; also that one of the ministers of the Bey of Tunis had received forty thousand dollars from the United States, besides valuable presents, whereas he, the Bashaw of Tripoli, had received little more.

He contended, that the President of the United States could not think of placing him on an equal footing with a minister of the Bey of Tunis, after he had been assured by the American Consul, that the regency of Tripoli was to be regarded and treated in the same manner as the other regencies of Barbary, and expressed the wish that the deeds of the President would correspond better with his words; but, if only flattering words were intended, he wished to know speedily, as delay might be prejudicial to our interests. The action of our government not being answerable to his impatience, on the 10th of May, 1801, he sent word to our Consul that he declared war against the United States, and that, on the 14th of the same month, he would take down the American flagstaff. It was accordingly cut down, and the declaration of war became complete.

Thus our concessions to one nest of pirates in 1795, preferred as an alternative to completing and sending out the six frigates, that had been conditionally authorized by the act of Congress of the year before, to impose by force of arms our own terms, naturally provoked and encouraged the

cupidity and insolence of another. The regencies of Tunis and Algiers were also dissatisfied and menacing.

The result of our recent struggle with France suggested a better expedient for obtaining peace from Tripoli than increased tribute, frigates, and presents of ammunition, to be employed, at some future day, in acts of piracy on our own commerce. Aware of the menacing tone, which the Barbary powers had assumed, though necessarily ignorant of the actual declaration of war by Tripoli, the government determined, as a precautionary measure, to send a naval force into the Mediterranean, to watch events and act as occasion might require. The squadron consisted of the frigates President, Captain James Barron, bearing the broad pendant of Commodore Richard Dale; the Philadelphia, Captain Samuel Barron; the Essex, Captain William Bainbridge; and the schooner Enterprise, Lieutenant A. Sterrett. Commodore Dale received his orders on the 20th of May, 1801, and soon after proceeded to sea with his squadron.

Decatur, after a brief respite of a few weeks, sailed in this squadron as first lieutenant of the Essex. His selection, by so skilful a commander as Captain Bainbridge, to fill the important station of first lieutenant of a frigate, after he had been but three years in the navy, is conclusive evidence of his entire fitness for his profession, of his indefatigable attention to duty, and possession of all those qualities, which recommend an officer to his

superior, and fit him to govern his own inferiors with ease, and without frequent resort to corrective discipline. Indeed, the faculty, which Decatur afterwards so eminently displayed, of winning the confidence and love of his inferiors, had already developed itself; and doubtless influenced Captain Bainbridge in securing the services of an officer, whose power of attaching his inferiors, and rendering their conformity to necessary discipline less an effort of obedience than a homage of the heart, would greatly lighten the most painful part of his own duties, and thereby contribute to the comfort of his command.

The squadron under Commodore Dale arrived at Gibraltar on the 1st of July, and found the Tripolitan Admiral lying in the harbor, with a frigate of twenty-six and a brig of sixteen guns. Although the Admiral stated that Tripoli was not at war with the United States, and that he had not captured any of our merchant vessels, Commodore Dale formed the opinion, from information obtained at Gibraltar, that Tripoli had actually declared war against us, though certain intelligence of such declaration had not as yet been received. He therefore left the Philadelphia to watch the Tripolitan cruisers, and proceeded with the President and Enterprise to visit Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, in fulfilment of his orders.

The Essex, in which Decatur sailed, was despatched along the northern coast of the Mediterranean, as far as Marseilles, to collect and convoy

out of the straits all the homeward bound American vessels, that might be collected in the intermediate ports. On her return, she touched first at Barcelona, where, from her fine appearance and condition as to order and discipline, and the novelty of being an American man-of-war, she became an object of great interest to the inhabitants, who visited her in crowds. There was a Spanish man-of-war lying in the harbor as a guard ship; and, as she was infinitely inferior in appearance and condition to the Essex, comparisons were made between the two vessels very much to the disadvantage of the Spaniard, whose officers, from having been the lions of the port, found themselves suddenly reduced to insignificance.

Irritated by this state of things, they so far forgot the courtesy due to strangers, as to offer indignities to the boats of the Essex, whilst passing in the night, under pretext of exercising the police of the port. They even fired several shots over Captain Bainbridge's barge, and made him come alongside their vessel to verify his character. Captain Bainbridge made a demand, the next day, for reparation, which, after delays and a correspondence with our minister in Madrid, eventually resulted in a censure of the Spanish Captain.

In the mean time, similar offence having been offered to Decatur, as he was returning to his ship in the night succeeding that on which Captain Bainbridge had been molested, he remonstrated with the Spanish commanding officer, who replied

to him very uncivilly. He informed the officer, that he would call to see him the next day in relation to his conduct, and then returned to the Essex. On the following morning, he repaired on board the Spanish vessel; but the officer, who had aggrieved him, was not there. Decatur left a message of denunciation, and followed him on shore; but, not finding him, and the Captain-General of Catalonia having requested Captain Bainbridge to unite with him in preventing a conflict, a meeting was rendered impossible.

When the American vessels at Barcelona were ready to put to sea, the Essex sailed down the Mediterranean with a large convoy, which was further augmented at Alicant and Malaga, and conducted it safely without the straits. She subsequently made another cruise up the Mediterranean, along the southern coast, touching at Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, and, crossing to the European shore, returned, as before, with a convoy of homeward bound Americans.

The orders, under which Commodore Dale acted, having been prepared in ignorance of the actual declaration of war against us by Tripoli, contemplated rather precautionary measures, in restraining her cruisers from putting to sea, and depredating on our commerce, than actual hostilities. Nothing beyond restraint, and the consequent protection of our trade, was effected by this squadron, except in a very brilliant action, which took place off Malta, between the schooner Enterprise, of twelve light

guns, commanded by Lieutenant Sterrett, and the Tripolitan ship Tripoli, of fourteen guns, commanded by Rais Mahomet Sous. The engagement, which the Tripoli began, lasted three hours, when the Tripoli struck, having lost her mizzen mast, and had twenty of her crew killed and thirty wounded. Lieutenant Sterrett, having no orders to make captures, threw all her guns and ammunition overboard, cut away her masts, and completely dismantled her, leaving her only one spar and a single sail to drift back to Tripoli, and bear to the Bashaw the message, that such treatment was the only tribute he would ever receive from Americans.

Towards the close of the year 1801, Commodore Dale returned with the President and Enterprise to the United States, leaving the Philadelphia to rendezvous at Syracuse, and appear occasionally before Tripoli and Tunis; and the Essex at Gibraltar, to watch the Tripolitan cruisers, which had been dismantled, and of which the crews had been sent home; and also to observe the entrance of the Mediterranean, in case any Tripolitan cruisers should attempt to pass into the Atlantic. From this tedious service the Essex was relieved by the arrival of Commodore Richard V. Morris, in the frigate Chesapeake, on the 25th of May, 1802. On the 17th of June, the Essex sailed for New York, where she arrived on the 22d of July.

Giving himself again a respite of but two or three weeks, Decatur joined, as first lieutenant, the

frigate New York, of thirty-six guns, commanded by Captain James Barron, and sailed in her for the Mediterranean on the 1st of September, 1802. Although suddenly brought into such important relations with a crew equally new to the service and to himself, Decatur soon succeeded in teaching them to perform their duty with cheerful promptitude. He possessed, in an eminent degree, the happy art of governing sailors rather by their affections than their fears. He was averse to punishment, and rarely had occasion to resort to it, being usually able to rely, for the preservation of discipline, on the reluctance of his inferiors to displease him. It was remarked of him at this period, by an officer, that "he seemed, as if by magic, to hold a boundless sway over the hearts of seamen at first sight." Such a conquest could only have been gained by a just regard for their rights, a watchful care of their comfort, and a sympathy in their feelings.

The squadron, to which Decatur was now attached, consisted of five frigates, the Chesapeake, Constellation, New York, Adams, and John Adams, and schooner Enterprise. It was thoroughly equipped, well officered and manned; and ample arrangements were made for supplies of provisions, stores, funds, the establishment of a hospital, and whatever was necessary to render the expedition complete. The crews were now also first enlisted to serve two years, instead of one; the former short term of service having

continually embarrassed our naval operations. Instead of the limited orders, which had restrained Commodore Dale to a strictly defensive course, Congress had, by an act passed on the 6th of February, 1802, authorized active hostilities against Tripoli; and Commodore Morris was furnished with liberal orders to employ his ample force in such manner, as would most speedily bring the Bashaw of Tripoli to terms. In the full expectation that he would effect this object, he was empowered, conjointly with Mr. Cathcart, to negotiate a treaty of peace.

Having at length assembled his squadron, consisting of the President, the John Adams, the New York, and the Enterprise, at Malta, in January, 1803, Commodore Morris sailed from that place, on the 13th of the same month, for Tripoli, with the intention of negotiating a peace, or, failing in this object, beginning the war in earnest. But, having encountered a heavy gale of wind, which lasted eleven days, he put back, at the end of that time, into Malta. Whilst there, a difficulty occurred between a British officer and one of the officers of the New York, which had a tragical result. As Decatur was connected with it, and as it led to his return to the United States before the cruise of the New York terminated, it may be proper to relate it.

Midshipman Joseph Bainbridge, with one of his messmates, being on liberty ashore, visited the theatre, where they became the subject of unpleasant notice and sneering remarks to some British officers,

who sat near them. One of them observed, in allusion to our war with Tripoli, which as yet had certainly not been conducted with special rigor, "Those Yankees will never stand the smell of powder!" The young Americans went into the lobby to consult about the notice to be taken of this remark, which, whether intended or not to be heard by them, was most grating to their feelings. They were soon followed by the British officers, and, as they walked up and down the lobby, the individual, who had made the offensive remark, walking in the contrary direction, ran rudely against Midshipman Bainbridge. The offence was repeated three several times. Convinced, at the third encounter, that the collision resulted from a fixed determination to insult him, Mr. Bainbridge knocked the offender down. The individual, who had gone so far out of his way to insult an unoffending boy, and that boy a foreigner, enjoying the hospitalities of a country where the insulter was at home, proved to be no less a personage than the secretary of Sir Alexander Ball, the governor.

He was a professed duellist, and had sought this occasion to practise his art, whilst he showed his mingled aversion and contempt for Americans, a fashionable feeling among the English of that day. A challenge from the duellist was received by Mr. Bainbridge on board the New York on the following morning. Bainbridge was equally unskilled in the use of the pistol and the code of duelling. He was about to accept the invitation, and make

use of the agency of a friend as young and inexperienced as himself, when Decatur, being informed of the occurrence, sent for Bainbridge, telling him that his antagonist was a professed duellist, who meant to take his life, and would do it if they two boys went out together, and offered himself to act as his friend.

Decatur now appeared and returned the answer to the challenge. As the friend of the challenged party, he selected pistols for the weapons, fixed the distance at four yards, and the word to be given, "Take aim," and to fire at the word "Fire." The second of the challenger objected to these terms, and proposed ten paces. He said to Decatur, "This looks like murder, Sir." Decatur replied, "No, Sir; this looks like death, but not like murder. Your friend is a professed duellist; mine is wholly inexperienced. I am no duellist, but I am acquainted with the use of the pistol. If you insist upon ten paces, I will fight your friend at that distance." The Englishman replied, "We have no quarrel with you, Sir." Decatur refusing to consent to any modification of his terms, unless he was substituted for Joseph Bainbridge, the parties met upon that footing. Decatur gave the word, "Take aim," and kept their pistols extended until he observed the hand of the Englishman to become unsteady. He then gave the word, "Fire." Bainbridge's ball passed through his adversary's hat. The Englishman, sure of his man at ten paces, missed Bainbridge entirely.

Decatur now informed young Bainbridge, that he could not save his life unless he fired low. It was the business of the Englishman, who had given the first offence wholly without provocation, to offer atonement; but no such offer was made. The combatants were again placed face to face, the word given as before, and the Englishman fell mortally wounded below the eye. It is painful to contemplate such an occurrence. This Englishman had probably his good qualities, as the station which he held was a proof of brilliant ones. Friends and relations doubtless remained to mourn his unhappy fate. But he had studiously sought the encounter in which he fell. Bainbridge yielded obedience to a code recognized by the civilized world, and rendered obligatory upon military men; he had to resist an encroachment upon his own honor, and that of his country.

In coming to his aid, Decatur exercised his coolness and judgment to place his inexperienced friend on an equal footing with the practised duellist, who had insulted him, and sought his life, and generously endeavored to take the place of his friend. Sir Alexander Ball subsequently demanded that Decatur and Bainbridge should be delivered up, to be tried by the civil courts for an infraction of the laws.

Before sailing from Malta, Commodore Morris received intelligence from Mr. Eaton, our Consul at Tunis, that the government of that regency

nad manifested a hostile spirit towards the United States. Commodore Morris abandoned, therefore, for the present, his purpose of commencing active operations against Tripoli, for which, indeed, the season had become unfavorable, and left Malta, for Tunis, on the 19th of February. From Tunis he proceeded to Algiers, and thence to Gibraltar, where he arrived on the 23d of March. There he removed his flag from the Chesapeake to the New York, taking Lieutenant Isaac Chauncey with him as flag captain.

Captain James Barron was ordered to take command of the Chesapeake, and return home. Lieutenant Chauncey was desirous that Decatur should remain as first lieutenant of the flagship; but in consequence of the demand, made at Malta, for the delivery of the officers engaged in the duel, it was deemed advisable, to avoid difficulty on that score, in the event of the squadron calling again at Malta, to send the officers concerned in it home. Decatur accordingly returned to the United States, in the Chesapeake, as a passenger.

Soon after his arrival, he was placed in temporary command of the new brig Argus, of sixteen guns, which he was to take to the Mediterranean, and transfer to Lieutenant Isaac Hull, his senior officer, whom he was to succeed in command of the schooner Enterprise.

About four months elapsed between Decatur's arrival in the frigate Chesapeake, and his departure in the Argus, in which vessel he reached

Gibraltar on the 1st of November, 1803. Here he was joined, on the 12th of November, by Commodore Preble, in the Constitution, from Cadiz, having the Enterprise in company. The exchange between Lieutenants Hull and Decatur now took place, and Decatur assumed the command of the Enterprise, a schooner mounting twelve light guns, with a complement of about eighty men. The energy and decision, which Commodore Preble had recently displayed before Tangiers, in extorting satisfaction from the emperor of Morocco, for some aggressions on our commerce, gave an earnest that our war with Tripoli was now to be prosecuted with spirit.

Having proclaimed the blockade of Tripoli, and despatched Decatur up the European coast, to give convoy, and meet him at Syracuse, the Commodore set sail from Gibraltar, on the 13th of November, for Algiers, where he landed our Consul, Mr. Lear. On the 24th of the same month, he spoke the British frigate Amazon, the Captain of which informed him of the loss of the frigate Philadelphia, Captain Bainbridge, off Tripoli. She had grounded on a rock whilst in chase of a vessel, had been surrounded by the Tripolitan gunboats, captured, and her officers and crews made captives. She was subsequently got afloat, and carried into port. By this disastrous intelligence, Commodore Preble was made aware that a ship equal to his own in size, composing well nigh one half of the squadron, with

which he was to operate against Tripoli, was taken from him, and added to the force of the enemy. Against Tripoli, moreover, a squadron, every way superior to what his own had been before the loss of the Philadelphia, had effected absolutely nothing. Yet, thus enfeebled and disconcerted, he did not despair. Calling off Malta, where he received official intelligence of the disaster of the Philadelphia, in a letter from her Captain, Commodore Preble shaped his course for Syracuse, which he had determined to make the rendezvous of his squadron, for refreshment and deposit of stores, in his contemplated operations against Tripoli. He fell in with Decatur, in the Enterprise, off Cape Passaro, and the two vessels entered the harbor of Syracuse in company.

On the 17th of December, Commodore Preble sailed from Syracuse for Tripoli, in the Constitution, having the Enterprise with him. On the 23d, Decatur captured, off Tripoli, the ketch Mastico, of four guns, having seventy Tripolitans on board. The squadron approached sufficiently near to Tripoli to reconnoitre the port, observe the position and arrangement of the batteries, and to behold, with regret, the Philadelphia lying at her moorings under their protection.

This spectacle, so wounding to the pride and patriotism of Americans, at once awakened Decatur's spirit and enterprise. He offered his services to Commodore Preble to destroy her with the Enterprise. Commodore Preble thought that such

an attempt would be attended with too much hazard. He said, however, that the project should be carried into effect on a proper occasion, and that Decatur, who had been the first to offer to execute the daring enterprise, should carry it into effect. Before any further service could be effected against Tripoli, a heavy gale came on to blow from the northeast. The squadron was in some danger of being wrecked on that boisterous and inhospitable coast. Commodore Preble therefore bore away for Syracuse.

The severe gales of a Mediterranean winter condemned the squadron of Commodore Preble to an irksome inactivity of several weeks in Syracuse. This is a decayed and truly melancholy place, in which the traces of past magnificence, when Syracuse numbered her quarter of a million of inhabitants, and was esteemed "the greatest and most beautiful of Grecian cities," are too painfully contrasted with present wretchedness and decay. The harbor is still as safe and easy of access as when it held the wonderful ship of Hiero, or furnished an arena to the contending fleets of Athens and Syracuse. The poor remnant of a city is still well placed, the climate delightful, the soil as fertile as when Sicily was the granary of the Roman empire. But now sixteen thousand of the most wretched inhabitants in the world alone remained as the representatives of so much greatness.

A few of the nobility, still possessing some

revenue from their rents, the only wealth that remained, opened their palaces to the officers of our squadron, and entertained them with simple yet not inelegant hospitality. The courtesies of the affluent were, however, compensated by the depredations of the humbler classes, driven by the cravings of hunger to crime. The officers were frequently waylaid by robbers and assassins, in returning to their ships from entertainments in the city; or more distant excursions to the wonderful excavation known as the Ear of Dionysius; the still more wonderful Latomiæ, from which the stone was quarried to build the ancient city, and in which were confined the prisoners of that expedition, whose failure under Nicias involved the downfall of Athenian power; or to the vast catacombs required for the interment of the ancient Syracusans, and which have been well called "a city of the dead."

On one occasion, Decatur, and Midshipman Macdonough, the future hero of Champlain, as they were passing in the night through one of the narrow streets to reach their boat and return to the Enterprise, were assailed by three armed ruffians. They drew their swords, and, placing their backs to a wall, defended themselves so stoutly that they succeeded in wounding two of their assailants, when the whole three sought safety in flight. One of them, being pursued by Macdonough into a house, got upon the roof, and, being nearly overtaken, precipitated himself to the ground, and perished from the fall.

CHAPTER IV.

Lieutenant Stewart volunteers to aid in destroying the Philadelphia. — Preble's Orders. — Preparations for the Expedition. — Decatur sails in the Intrepid, accompanied by the Siren. — Arrival off Tripoli. — Decatur enters the Harbor, and boards the Philadelphia. — Captures and burns her. — Sails out of the Harbor. — Tumult in Town and Harbor. — Batteries open on the Intrepid. — Escapes without Injury. — Expedition returns to Syracuse. — Decatur's Reception by Preble. — Recommended by Preble for Promotion.

Whilst the squadron was thus detained by the inclemency of the weather at Syracuse, the commanders of the different vessels frequently met on board the Constitution, at Preble's hospitable table. On these occasions, his contemplated operations against Tripoli were the frequent theme of conversation. The destruction of the Philadelphia was the first and most important object to be attained, in order to open the harbor, of which she occupied the centre, to the ulterior operations which he contemplated. Besides, the moral effect on his own followers, and on the Tripolitans, of leaving this trophy longer in their hands, was a consideration to which he attached no little importance.

At this time, Lieutenant-commanding Charles Stewart, now the veteran Commodore of that name,

who had recently arrived from Algiers in the brig Siren, of eighteen guns, offered his services to Commodore Preble, to take part in the destruction of the Philadelphia. The Commodore was already pledged to intrust the service to Decatur, but the offer of Lieutenant Stewart was so far accepted, that the task of coöperation was assigned to him when the plan was matured. Whilst this subject was occupying their attention, a letter was received from Captain Bainbridge, from his prison in Tripoli, part of it written in lemon juice, which became legible on being held to the fire, suggesting various plans for annoying the enemy, and among them that of destroying the Philadelphia by surprise. The suggestion, coinciding with what had previously been determined on, served to confirm the purpose of Commodore Preble. The ketch Mastico, which Decatur had recently captured, offered a suitable vessel for the undertaking. She was taken into the service under the name of the Intrepid, so well adapted to the enterprise she was to undertake. The following letter of Commodore Preble to Decatur, containing his orders for the execution of the enterprise, is truly characteristic and admirable.

"United States Frigate Constitution,

"Syracuse Harbor, January 31st, 1804.

"SIR,

"You are hereby ordered to take command of the prize ketch, which I have named the Intrepid, and prepare her with all possible despatch

for a cruise of thirty-five days, with full allowance of water and provisions for seventy-five men. I shall send you five midshipmen from the Constitution, and you will take seventy men, including officers, from the Enterprise, if that number can be found ready to volunteer their services for boarding and burning the Philadelphia, in the harbor of Tripoli; if not, report to me, and I will furnish you with men to complete your complement. It is expected you will be ready to sail tomorrow evening, or some hours sooner, if the signal is made for that purpose.

"It is my order that you proceed to Tripoli, in company with the Siren, Lieutenant Stewart, enter that harbor in the night, board the Philadelphia, burn her, and make good your retreat with the Intrepid, if possible, unless you can make her the means of destroying the enemy's vessels in the harbor, by converting her into a fire ship for that purpose, and retreating in your boats, and those of the Siren. You must take fixed ammunition and apparatus for the frigate's eighteen pounders, and if you can, without risking too much, you may endeavor to make them the instruments of destruction to the shipping and Bashaw's Castle. You will provide all the necessary combustibles for burning and destroying ships. The destruction of the Philadelphia is an object of great importance, and I rely with confidence on your intrepidity and enterprise to effect it. Lieutenant Stewart will support you with the

boats of the Siren, and cover your retreat with that vessel. Be sure and set fire in the gun room berths, cockpit, store rooms forward, and berths on the berth deck.

"After the ship is well on fire, point two of the eighteen pounders, shotted, down the main hatch, and blow her bottom out. I enclose you a memorandum of the articles, arms, ammunition, and fireworks necessary, and which you are to take with you. Return to this place as soon as possible, and report to me your proceedings. On boarding the frigate, it is probable you may meet with resistance. It will be well, in order to prevent alarm, to carry all by the sword. May God prosper you in this enterprise.

"I have the honor to be, Sir, your obedient servant, EDWARD PREBLE."

It remains to be seen how entirely to the letter and spirit these orders were obeyed. It is probable that these orders, though dated on the 31st of January, were not issued until the 3d of February, on account of the weather not being favorable for the departure of the Intrepid. It was important that no hint of the intended expedition should get abroad, until after it should have already sailed. On the afternoon of the 3d of February, the officers and crew of the Enterprise were mustered on the quarter deck. Decatur briefly communicated to them the service, which he was about to undertake, and inquired who would accompany

him. Every officer, man, and boy came forward in a body. The gallant wish of all could not be gratified.

The Commodore had limited the whole number to be taken from the Enterprise to seventy, including Decatur and his officers. It was indispensable that some officers and men should remain to take care of the schooner. Unwilling, perhaps, to select from his lieutenants, Decatur took the whole. They were James Lawrence, Joseph Bainbridge, and Jonathan Thorn. He also took his surgeon, Lewis Herrmann, at the urgent request of the latter, and his favorite midshipman, Thomas Macdonough. Sixty-two of the most active and healthy of the crew of the Enterprise were selected, to their own great joy, and to the sorrow of those who were unavoidably left; and the whole went with alacrity to the Intrepid. Here they were joined by the five midshipmen, whom Commodore Preble had mentioned that he would send from the Constitution. The young officers selected for this enviable distinction, significant of the good opinion of their discerning Commodore, and of their own eminent worth, were Midshipmen Ralph Izard, John Rowe, Alexander Laws, Charles Morris, and John Davis. The reader will not fail to note how many of the officers of the Intrepid, ennobled by participation in this enterprise, became, by their achievements afterwards, known to honorable fame.

In addition to these persons, a Sicilian pilot, a

native of Palermo, well acquainted with the harbor of Tripoli, who was attached to the Constitution, was received on board the Intrepid. His name was Salvadore Catalano, which now figures honorably at the head of the masters of the navy.* This carried the number of the crew to seventy-four, and, to render it exactly conformable to the order of Commodore Preble, Midshipman Thomas O. Anderson was subsequently received from the Siren. Full of well founded hopes of distinction and patriotic excitement, the little band of adventurers set sail that same evening, in company with the Siren, from Syracuse.

After a pleasant passage, the two vessels arrived in sight of Tripoli, on the 7th of February, and every preparation was made to execute the contemplated service the same night; when one of those heavy gales, so common in winter in the neighborhood of Tripoli, came on to blow, and the vessels were obliged to stand out to sea, in order to gain an offing, and avoid being seen. The situation of Decatur and his followers, on board the Intrepid, was most uncomfortable. She had not space for berths for one third of her officers and crew. She labored so much, that there seemed even a danger of her foundering, and the provisions, which had been hastily put on board of her at the moment of departure, proved to be both

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* Since the above was written, he died in Washington, in January, 1846.

unwholesome and scanty. During five or six days, the little vessel was tossed about almost at the mercy of the wind and waves. With the physical energies of his followers somewhat impaired by their sufferings, but with spirits unabated, Decatur came again in sight of Tripoli in the afternoon of the 16th of February.

In order to form a just estimate of the hazard of Decatur's proposed attack, it should be premised that the Philadelphia had forty guns mounted. These were double shotted, and kept ready for firing. A full complement of men to serve her batteries was kept constantly on board of her. She was moored within half gun shot of the Bashaw's Castle, and the Molehead and Crown Batteries, and within effective range of ten other batteries, the whole mounting together one hundred and fifteen guns of heavy calibre. Three Tripolitan cruisers, mounting together twenty-six guns, two galleys, and nineteen gunboats, lay between her and the shore, at distances from her of from two to three cables' length. All these vessels were in like manner fully manned and kept ready for an attack. Such were the formidable defences which protected the Philadelphia, when Decatur with his little ketch of sixty tons, mounting four small guns, and having a crew of seventy-five souls, undertook her capture and destruction.

The plan of Commodore Preble, as exhibited in his orders to Decatur, had contemplated that the

boats of the Siren should accompany the Intrepid, and take part in the expedition. But the Siren had purposely kept at a distance from the Intrepid during the day, to avoid being seen from Tripoli. The wind, which was light from north-northwest, was still lighter in the offing, which prevented the Siren from closing up so early after nightfall as Lieutenant Stewart desired. At seven o'clock, Decatur entered between the reef and shoal, which form the mouth of the harbor. The boats of the Siren had not yet joined him; and, indeed, the hour agreed on between Lieutenant Stewart and Decatur for the attack, which was ten o'clock, had not yet arrived.

Still Decatur had had so much experience of the uncertainty of the weather on this coast, that he determined not to let the present favorable moment pass unimproved. Assigning again to each officer his special service and station, to board with him, to defend the different decks when the frigate should be carried, to fire her in various directions, to guard the ketch and preserve the means of retreat for his brave followers when the service should be effected, and addressing to all a last word of appeal in behalf of their country, which they were about to serve and honor, of their brother officers and seamen in captivity, whom they would at once avenge and bring nearer to the day of liberation, Decatur steered boldly onward towards the Philadelphia, which now began to loom forth amid the obscurity of less and remoter objects,

aided by the faint illumination of a crescent moon.

It had been intended to reach the Philadelphia by the most direct passage at the western entrance of the harbor, between New Fort on the Mole and the rocks and shoals of Seteef, where there was ordinarily sufficient water for a vessel of the Intrepid's draught. But on approaching this entrance, the surf was found breaking entirely across it from the sea, occasioned by the late gales. It became necessary to haul up and make a considerable circuit, in order to enter the harbor by the main channel lying to the east of Shinel.

By nine o'clock, the air, which had been gradually shifting from north-northwest to northeast since they got under way, had become very light, and the progress of the Intrepid was scarcely perceptible. Still she stole slowly onward towards her huge foe. A little before half past nine, they were within two hundred yards of the Philadelphia, which, tending to the northeast breeze, lay with her head nearly seaward. It was Decatur's intention to run under her bows, and board over the forecastle. Decatur stood by the helm with the pilot, and a man who understood the Italian, to interpret. Two or three of the officers, to represent the crew, were alone visible about the decks; the rest lay hidden under the bulwarks.

It had now fallen entirely calm, and the Intrepid became stationary within a hundred yards of the Philadelphia. Soon after, a light land breeze from

the southeast, taking the Intrepid aback and canting the Philadelphia, by whose bulk the Intrepid was in a great measure becalmed, brought the two vessels nearly parallel to each other at the distance of little more than twenty yards, their heads in the same direction, and the Intrepid abreast of the larboard gangway of the Philadelphia. The moon, which still lingered above the horizon, enabled Decatur to see ten or twelve of the crew looking over her hammock rail. Decatur was now hailed from the Philadelphia, and ordered to keep off. The pilot, Catalano, as previously instructed by Decatur, promptly answered that they had lost their anchors in the late gale under Cape Mesurado. He asked to be permitted to run a warp to the frigate, and ride by her until anchors could be obtained from the shore.

The Tripolitan captain, recognized by Catalano to be the interlocutor, asked what brig that was in the offing; for, notwithstanding their precautions, the Siren had been seen. Catalano, with great tact, replied, that it was the Transfer, a former British man-of-war, which had been purchased for the Tripolitans at Malta, and whose arrival at Tripoli was anxiously expected.

During this conversation, the Intrepid's boat, which lay ready with a rope led from the bow of their vessel, shoved off; and, pulling to the fore chains of the Philadelphia, made the end fast to one of the ring-bolts of her fore chains. A boat from the Philadelphia brought a rope from the

after part of the ship, and passed it into the Intrepid's boat, which returned with it on board. A few of the crew began to haul on the lines, and the Intrepid was drawn gradually towards the Philadelphia. Some distrust was now awakened among the Tripolitans in the boat, which had brought the line. They raised the cry of "Americanos," and it was repeated in terror throughout the ship. The Intrepid was repeatedly ordered off, and Decatur observed them taking the tompions out of the guns in readiness to fire. The surprise was not therefore perfect; the alarm had been given, the real country, character, and intentions of the visitors recognized, and the struggle seemed likely to prove sanguinary.

As the vessels came in contact, Decatur sprang at the main chains of the Philadelphia, calling out, "Board!" He clambered over the channels and rail, and reached the enemy's deck, being preceded an instant by Midshipman Charles Morris, and followed in the next by Midshipman Laws; and quickly, in succession, as they could find space to ascend through the gangway, the ports, and over the rail, by all the officers and crew, to the number of sixty, the remainder having been detailed to guard the ketch. Whilst they were mustering upon the quarter deck, the crew of the Philadelphia had also got up from below, and collected in a confused mass on the forecastle and in the gangways. Decatur waited

in silence until his followers had collected around him, when, forming a front with his men across the deck, and placing himself at their head, he rushed, sword in hand, upon the Tripolitans. There was a contest, but, as Decatur reported, "a short" one. The resistance was soon overcome. Crowded together, and trampling upon each other in the disorderly attempt to escape, the Tripolitans were either cut down or driven overboard, until not an enemy remained on the spar deck.

The American officers and men, now separating according to their stations, quickly overcame all resistance below, cutting down or driving overboard whomsoever they encountered. Many of the Tripolitans escaped in a boat which lay alongside; some may have reached the neighboring cruisers and gunboats; many found a watery grave. Five minutes sufficed to clear the ship of every enemy. At the end of that time, or a very little later, Decatur found himself on the quarter deck of the Philadelphia, in full possession of that ship, and destined to be her last, as his father had been her first, commander.

That Decatur may have felt a wish, at this moment, to prolong the period of his command, and bear away the Philadelphia to fight the future battles of his country, and remain an enduring trophy of his valor, presented a second time to the republic by the heroism of one Philadelphian, as she had first been by the patriotic generosity of many, we can well believe. But the Philadelphia

was dismantled, her bowsprit and fore-mast gone; the mouth of the harbor was intricate and difficult of egress for so large a ship; there was no wind, and no force of men or boats to tow her to sea. The efforts to attain this object would have withdrawn the force of the little band from the defence of the vessel, and might have rendered her recapture possible. The orders of Preble, conceived in a wise appreciation of all the difficulties to be overcome, were positive that she should be burned. The moral effect on Americans and on the enemy would be the same, whether she were carried away or destroyed. With natural regret, perhaps, yet with promptitude, Decatur gave the fatal order for the combustibles to be passed up from the ketch, and for the various parties to distribute themselves according to their stations, and fire the ship in the gun room berths, around the magazine scuttle, in the cockpit, the birth deck rooms, and the forward store rooms, as prescribed by Preble.

Whilst the various parties hastened to perform this service with precision and despatch, Decatur had an opportunity to glance at the scene around the ship. Though he had obeyed Preble's emphatic injunction, "in order to prevent alarm, to carry all by the sword," yet, as Decatur observes in his official report, "the noise occasioned by boarding and contending for possession, although no firearms were used, gave a general alarm on shore, and on board their cruisers, which lay about a

cable and a half's length from us; and many boats, filled with men, lay around, but from which we received no annoyance."

These inactive spectators in the boats and cruisers were probably paralyzed by the suddenness of the achievement, the clash of arms, the shrieks of the wounded and drowning; or perhaps they were waiting to concert their measures, and watch an opportunity to attack with advantage. But none such occurred. The parties detailed to fire the ship had performed that duty simultaneously, and so quickly, that they were soon driven from below by the smoke and fumes of the conflagration. Soon the sharp crackling of the flames gave sure indication, that the destroying element had in turn assumed its mastery over the devoted vessel, to give way to no new conqueror. Clouds of smoke and flashes of flame began to issue from the ports and mount the hatchways. Decatur now ordered his followers to return to the Intrepid. They descended quickly, yet without confusion, and without accident, accompanied by a wounded Tripolitan, whom humanity forbade them to abandon to the horrible fate, which probably awaited many of his comrades concealed in the recesses of the vessel.

When all were safely assembled on the deck of the Intrepid, (for so admirably had the service been executed, that not a man was missing, and only one slightly wounded,) Decatur gave the order to cut the fasts and shove off. The necessity for prompt

obedience and exertion was urgent. The flames had now gained the lower rigging, and ascended to the tops; they darted furiously from the ports, flashing from the quarter gallery round the mizzen of the Intrepid, as her stern dropped clear of the ship. To estimate the perils of their position, it must be borne in mind, that the fire had been communicated, by these fearless men, to the near neighborhood of both magazines of the Philadelphia. The Intrepid herself was a fire ship, having been supplied with combustibles, a mass of which, ready to be converted into the means of destroying other vessels of the enemy, if the opportunity should offer, lay in barrels on her quarter deck, covered only with a tarpaulin.

With destruction thus encompassing them within and without, Decatur and his brave followers were unmoved. Calmly they put forth the necessary exertion, breasted the Intrepid off with spars, and, pressing on their sweeps, caused her slowly to withdraw from the vicinity of the burning mass. A gentle breeze from the land came auspiciously at the same moment, and wafted the Intrepid beyond the reach of the flames, bearing with it, however, a shower of burning embers, fraught with danger to a vessel laden with combustibles, had not discipline, order, and calm self-possession, been at hand for her protection. Soon this peril was also left behind, and Decatur and his followers were at a sufficient distance to contemplate securely the spectacle, which the Philadelphia presented. Hull,

spars, and rigging, were now enveloped in flames. As the metal of her guns became heated, they were discharged in succession from both sides, serving as a brilliant salvo in honor of the victory, and not harmless for the Tripolitans, as her starboard battery was fired directly into the town.

The town itself, the castles, the minarets of the mosques, and the shipping in the harbor, were all brought into distinct view by the splendor of the conflagration. It served also to reveal to the enemy the cause of their disaster in the little Intrepid, as she slowly withdrew from the harbor. The shot of the shipping and castles fell thickly around her, throwing up columns of spray, which the brilliant light converted into a new ornament of the scene. Only one shot took effect, and that passed through her top-gallant sail. Three hearty American cheers were now given in mingled triumph and derision. Soon after, the boats of the Siren joined company, and assisted in towing the Intrepid out of the harbor. The cables of the Philadelphia having burned off, she drifted on the rocks near the western entrance of the harbor; and then the whole spectacle, so full of moral sublimity, considering the means by which it had been effected, and of material grandeur, had its appropriate termination in the final catastrophe of her explosion.

Nor were the little band of heroes on board the Intrepid the only exulting spectators of this

scene. Lieutenant Stewart and his companions on board the Siren, watching with intense interest, beheld in the conflagration a pledge of Decatur's success; and Captain Bainbridge, with his fellow-captives in the dungeons of Tripoli, saw in it a motive of national exultation, and an earnest that a spirit was at work to hasten the day of their liberation.

Not long after the Intrepid had reached the open bay, and cast anchor near the Siren, a heavy gale commenced blowing, so as to make it difficult for her to weigh and clear the land. This circumstance shows how judiciously Decatur decided to precipitate his movements, whilst the weather continued favorable.

The Intrepid, being clear of the harbor, found the wind favorable for Syracuse, and bore away at once, in company with the Siren, for that port, where she arrived on the morning of the 18th of February, after an absence of fifteen days; which must have occasioned no little anxiety to Commodore Preble, and the officers and men who remained at Syracuse, to be exchanged for rapturous congratulations when they saw their friends return triumphant, and with undiminished numbers.

The admiration, which this achievement awakened in our little squadron, is sufficiently shown by its effect on Commodore Preble's mind, as it evinced itself in his official report made on the 19th of February, the day after the Intrepid's

return to Syracuse, and still more in the following supplementary letter of the same date, having special reference to Decatur's share in the enterprise. "Lieutenant Decatur is an officer of too much value to be neglected. The important service he has rendered, of destroying an enemy's frigate of forty guns, and the gallant manner in which he performed it, in a small vessel of only sixty tons and four guns, under the enemy's batteries, surrounded by their corsairs and armed boats, the crews of which stood appalled at his intrepidity and daring, would, in any navy in Europe, insure him instantaneous promotion to the rank of post captain. I wish, as a stimulus, it should be done in this instance. It would eventually be of real service to our navy. I beg most earnestly to recommend him to the President, that he may be rewarded according to his merit." It should be here remarked, that the intermediate rank of commander did not at this time exist.

The admiration of Commodore Preble was shared by his officers and seamen, by the people of Syracuse, and, as it became known, by those of all Europe. At this period, Nelson was in command of the British fleet engaged in blockading Toulon, having his flag on board the Victory. When the news of Decatur's achievement reached him, he is said to have pronounced it "the most bold and daring act of the age."

What greater honor could await any act of naval heroism than such praise from Nelson?

In due time, we shall see how this sound of praise, begun on the shores of Europe, was re-echoed from our own, and how the government at home responded to the generous and gallant wish of Preble, that Decatur should, by a single step, be made his own equal.

CHAPTER V.

Squadron sails for Tripoli; thence for Tunis. — Visits Naples, Messina, and Syracuse. — Repairs to Tripoli. — Defences of that City. — Preparations for Attack. — Decatur commands a Division of Gunboats. — Attacks a Detachment of the Enemy's Flotilla. — Hand to hand Engagement. — Learns that his Brother James had been treacherously slain. — Boards the Tripolitan. — Struggle of Decatur and a Tripolitan Captain. — Self-Devotion of a Sailor to save Decatur. — Victory of Trippe. — Result of the Bombardment.

On the return of the Intrepid to Syracuse, Decatur resumed the command of the Enterprise.

The severity of a Mediterranean winter condemned the squadron to some additional weeks of inactivity. Occasionally one of the vessels was despatched to Malta for such supplies as could not be obtained at Syracuse, and for advices from home, and from our captive countrymen in Tripoli. It was not till the 27th of March, that Commodore Preble was able to appear with his squadron before Tripoli, and lay the port under blockade. A heavy gale from the northeast commenced blowing three days after, when he bore away for Tunis, with part of his squadron.

Commodore Preble's observation of the position and defences of Tripoli had convinced him, that nothing decisive against it could be effected without an increase of force. He sensibly felt the loss of the Philadelphia; but this was irreparable. To supply in some measure his deficiencies in this respect, it occurred to him to endeavor to obtain the loan of some gunboats to coöperate with his squadron, and attack the floating defences of Tripoli, whilst the Constitution and other vessels should bombard the batteries. For this purpose, he visited Naples, and applied for the required loan to the King of the Two Sicilies, who was also at war with Tripoli. An order for six gunboats, and two bombards, completely equipped for service, was readily given by the King, and Preble immediately sailed with them for Messina, where the vessels were lying. The

gunboats were of the burden of twenty-five tons, and, being intended for harbor defence, they were flat bottomed. They neither sailed nor rowed well, and were very bad sea boats. Their armament consisted of one long twenty-four pounder, on a pivot on the forecastle. The bombards were of thirty tons' burden, of similar construction to the gunboats, and armed with a thirteen inch brass sea mortar each. By permission of the King, twelve Neapolitans were allowed to enter for each boat, making in all ninety-six bombardiers, gunners, and sailors, who were thus received into the service.

The bombards not being entirely equipped, Commodore Preble sailed with the gunboats from Messina for Syracuse on the 30th of May, and arrived on the following day. He left the gunboats at Syracuse, and, touching at Malta, he appeared off Tripoli on the 13th of June, and sent Mr. O'Brien, our former Consul at Algiers, on shore, to treat for a ransom of American prisoners. He was not able to effect any satisfactory arrangement, on account of the unreasonable demands of the Bashaw. Permission was, however, obtained to send on shore such clothing and stores as the prisoners required. On the succeeding day, intelligence, which Commodore Preble had received, of a probable rupture with Tunis, induced him to sail for that port in the Constitution, having the Argus and Enterprise in company. Having satisfactorily adjusted the difficulty with

Tunis, and confirmed the wavering friendship of the Bey, Commodore Preble proceeded to Messina to receive the bombards, and, having obtained them, repaired to his rendezvous at Syracuse.

On the 14th of July, Commodore Preble sailed from Syracuse in the Constitution, having in company the schooners Nautilus and Enterprise, the two bombards, and six gunboats. He arrived at Malta on the 16th, but was detained there by adverse gales until the 21st, when he sailed, and arrived off Tripoli on the 25th, and was joined by the rest of the squadron, consisting of the brigs Siren, Argus, and Scourge, and schooner Vixen. The Scourge had been a Tripolitan privateer, which Lieutenant Charles Stewart had recently captured with the Siren, and which Commodore Preble had commissioned as a cruiser.

Preble's whole force thus consisted of one frigate, three brigs, three schooners, two bombards, and six gunboats, mounting in all one hundred and thirty-six guns, more than two thirds of which were short and light, and two mortars. With this force he proposed to manœuvre along the edge of the reefs, which skirted the harbor, which, as we have seen, was defended by formidable batteries judiciously constructed along the skirts of a well walled city, mounting one hundred and fifteen pieces of heavy cannon, and manned by twenty-five thousand Turks and Arabs; having, moreover, the additional protection of a ten gun brig, two schooners of eight guns each, two galleys, and

nineteen gunboats, each armed with a heavy eighteen or twenty-six pounder at the bow, and two howitzers on the quarters, and manned by formidable crews. The cruisers, galleys, and gunboats were ranged in order of battle from the city, situated at the southwestern part of the harbor, seaward towards its entrance, and lay protected behind a range of rocks and shoals, which skirts the whole extent of the harbor; and which, while it effectually protected them from the approach of a large vessel, offered various openings, through which they could emerge for the annoyance of an enemy, and by which they could escape if in danger of being overpowered.

If the hardihood of Decatur seemed great in undertaking to capture a heavy frigate, formidable in herself, and surrounded by such formidable defences, with a little ketch of sixty tons, that of Preble, in undertaking to bombard with his little squadron, and from behind his slight wooden bulwarks, the massive stone and mortar of a dozen heavily armed batteries, with all their floating accessories of defence, will appear, on mature consideration, little inferior. Yet this was what Preble now only waited favorable wind and weather to execute. These proving propitious, on the afternoon of the 28th of July, he anchored his squadron two miles and a half north of the city, in order to be at hand at an early hour in the following morning to make an attack. Hardly, however, were their anchors down, when the wind

suddenly shifted, and soon after came on to blow heavily from north-northwest with a heavy sea, setting directly towards the shore.

It became necessary to weigh anchor and endeavor to get an offing. The gunboats were in tow of the larger vessels, and were in imminent danger of being towed under, although, to prevent this disaster, less sail was carried than the safety of the vessels, had that been alone to be considered, seemed to require. Happily, the wind hauling to the eastward, the squadron weathered the dangers under its lee, and stretched out into the open sea. The gale now veered from northeast to southeast, increasing in violence till the 31st of July, when its force was so terrific, that the close reefed foresail and maintop sail of the Constitution were blown in ribbons from the bolt ropes. The bombards and gunboats were in imminent danger of foundering; and, had the sea risen in proportion to the strength of the gale, Commodore Preble was of opinion that all of them would have been lost, and his previous delays and preparations rendered fruitless.

It was the 3d of August before the squadron was able to approach the harbor with favorable wind and weather to attempt an attack. At noon of that day, the wind being east, they were within two miles and a half of the batteries, which were discovered to be manned in readiness for defence. The Bashaw, who was contemplating the scene from the battlements of his Castle, and

whose confidence in the superiority of his defences led him to despise his enemies, contemptuously remarked to his courtiers, "They will mark their distance for tacking; they are a sort of Jews, who have no notion of fighting." The succeeding evolution of the squadron encouraged him to believe that his prediction was verified. It soon after wore with the heads of the vessels out of the harbor. But it was only to make the final arrangements for the attack. Signal was now made for the squadron to come within hail, and Preble made known to the commanders his intention to attack the enemy's shipping and batteries, and communicated his plan of operations.

The mortar and gunboats now received their additional officers and crews. The bomb vessels were to take a favorable station for bombarding the town; the gunboats were to attack the gunboats and galleys of the enemy. They were divided into two divisions of three each, the first division being under the command of Lieutenant-Commanding Somers, of the Nautilus, the second under command of Decatur. Every preparation being made, at half past one, the squadron wore in succession and stood towards the batteries.

At two, the bombs and gunboats were cast off, and soon after ordered by signal to attack the enemy. Shortly before three o'clock, the bombs, being within half a mile of the shore, commenced the action by throwing shells into the town. The enemy's shipping and batteries immediately opened

a tremendous fire, which was received and returned by our squadron, as it gradually approached, until within two cables' length of the rocks, and three cables' length, or less than a quarter of a mile, of a portion of the batteries, at which distance it continued to manœuvre, covering our own gunboats, and battering the castles of the enemy. Meantime the enemy's gunboats, trusting to their more than threefold superiority of numbers, as well as superior size, had previously abandoned their sheltered position behind the rocks, and come out in two divisions to attack and overpower ours.

The division of Decatur, being on the left, or eastward, was more to windward than that of Somers, who, as the senior officer, had the right. Decatur was able to bear down with sails and oars to attack the eastern division of the enemy, consisting of nine gunboats. He ordered Lieutenants Joseph Bainbridge and Trippe, who commanded the other two boats of his division, to unship their bowsprits, as it was his intention to board. Somers, being further to leeward, and having a duller boat, was unable by dint of rowing to reach the division of the enemy, for which Decatur was steering; he therefore bore gallantly away to attack the leeward division, consisting of five boats; but Lieutenant James Decatur, in the second boat of Somers's line, having a faster boat, so far departed from the established order, as to bring his boat into his brother's line, which

seemed likely to be soonest engaged with an overpowering force of the enemy.

The division of Decatur advanced steadily towards the enemy, pouring in upon him a shower of grape and musket balls. The boat of Lieutenant Bainbridge, having her lateen yard shot away at this conjuncture, dropped astern of her consorts; Decatur was followed by his brother and by Trippe, and they each ran on board of one of the enemy's boats; and as the discharge of great guns and musketry ceased, it was succeeded by a series of hand to hand engagements, in which the pistol, cutlass, pike, and battle-axe, with the physical strength and courage that gave impulse to them, became arbiters of the struggle. Decatur was followed on board of his antagonist by twenty-three of his countrymen, the twelve Neapolitans remaining in charge of the gunboat.

As the crews of the enemy's gunboats varied from thirty-six to fifty, he had to encounter an overpowering superiority of numbers in the very sort of warfare, at which Turks have the reputation of being most formidable. But nothing could resist the disciplined courage and impetuosity of Decatur and his followers. A desperate struggle of ten minutes' duration sufficed to clear the enemy's deck. At the end of that time, part of the Tripolitans lay dead, or desperately wounded, on the deck; a part had precipitated themselves into the sea; eight sought safety in the hold of their own vessel. The Tripolitan colors were

hauled down, and Decatur, taking his prize in tow, was proceeding out of the harbor, when the boat, which had been commanded by his brother, came under his stern, and informed him that they had engaged and captured one of the largest of the enemy's boats, but that, after she had struck, Lieutenant James Decatur, in the act of stepping on board of her to take possession, had been shot through the head by her treacherous commander.

Decatur's noble indignation at such base treachery needed not the stimulant of fraternal agony, at the sight of an expiring brother, to impel him to the immediate pursuit of the assassin. Lieutenant Thorn, with the greater part of his crew, had been left in possession of the prize. Still heedless of every prudential suggestion, he laid the head of his boat towards that of his brother's murderer, and, following him within the enemy's line, where he had taken refuge, ran on board, and leaped upon his deck, followed by the gallant young Macdonough, and the nine remaining Americans of his crew. This was a desperate undertaking, suggested by a courage which stopped to consider no inequality. For twenty minutes, the result of the contest seemed uncertain. Three of Decatur's followers were already disabled by wounds.

At length Decatur was able to single out the treacherous commander, conspicuous no less by gigantic size, than by the ferocity with which he fought, and to meet him face to face. Decatur

was armed with a cutlass, the Turk with a heavily ironed boarding-pike. As the latter made a thrust at Decatur, he struck it violently with his cutlass, in the hope of severing the head; but his cutlass, coming in contact with the iron, broke at the hilt, and left him without a weapon. Many a brave man thus disarmed might have turned to seek another weapon. But Decatur stood his ground, and, attempting with his right arm to parry the next thrust of his antagonist, received the point of it in his arm and breast. Tearing the weapon from the wound, he succeeded likewise, by a sudden jerk, in wresting it from the hands of his adversary, who immediately grappled him; and, after a fierce and prolonged struggle, both fell with violence on the deck, Decatur being uppermost. During this time, the crews, rushing to the aid of their respective commanders, joined in furious conflict round their persons. A Tripolitan officer, who had got behind Decatur, aimed an unseen blow at his head, which must have decided his fate, had not a young man, by the name of Reuben James, who had lost the use of both arms by wounds, rushed in, and intercepted the descending cimeter with his own head, thus rescuing his beloved commander by an act of heroic self-sacrifice which has never been surpassed.*

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* Some have said this noble act of self-devotion was performed by Daniel Frazer, which left the name of the indi-

Just then the Tripolitan, exerting to the uttermost his superior strength, succeeded in turning Decatur, and, getting upon him, held him to the deck with an iron clutch of his left hand, whilst, thrusting his right beside him, he drew from his sash the shorter of two yataghans, which, for the very purpose of such close work, he carried in the same sheath. The moments of Decatur's existence seemed numbered; scarce an interval remained to breathe a prayer for mercy in another world; a second brother was about to perish beneath the rage of the fierce Tripolitan. But the cool courage and fertile resources of Decatur came to his rescue in this extremity. Disengaging his left hand, he caught the right of the Tripolitan, stayed the yataghan as it was about to drink his blood, and, thrusting his own right hand into his pantaloons' pocket, succeeded in cocking a pistol, which he had there, and, giving it the proper direction, fired. The Tripolitan relaxed his hold, and Decatur, disengaging himself from the heap of wounded and slain, which the struggle had gathered around him, stood again that day a victor on the enemy's deck.*

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vidual somewhat uncertain. See a notice of Reuben James, in the Appendix.

* The above version of this celebrated struggle, which has in other places been narrated somewhat differently, is derived from Messrs. J. K. Hamilton and Francis Gurney Smith, early companions of Decatur, who, feeling a natural curiosity

Animated by the example of Decatur, and impelled by his own heroic courage, the gallant Trippe had in like manner singled out one of the heaviest of the enemy's gunboats, and run her on board. He was followed by Midshipman John D. Henly and nine men; but ere any more could reach the enemy's deck, the boats had so far separated as to prevent the rest from following. Thus left to contend against such fearful odds, an obstinate and sanguinary struggle took place, the result of which remained long doubtful. In this engagement, as in the last of Decatur's, a personal conflict took place between Trippe and the Tripolitan commander, like the antagonist of Decatur, a man of Herculean strength. After inflicting on Trippe no fewer than eleven sabre wounds, the Tripolitan at length received his death blow from the hand of his less powerful but more adroit antagonist.

The result of this contest between the commanders decided that of their followers. The superior discipline and courage of the Americans declared the victory in their favor. The division

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to learn the true history of the adventure, drew from Decatur himself the statement imbodied in the text. On the body of the Tripolitan, or rather Turk, (for the officers, like the Bashaw, were from Constantinople,) a devotional work was found, containing Arabic prayers and passages from the Koran. This work has, since the death of Decatur, been presented by Mrs. Decatur to the library of the Catholic College in Georgetown, where it may now be seen by the curious.

of the enemy's flotilla, consisting of two galleys and five gunboats, which lay within the rocks, attempted to pass out through the channels between the rocks, to succor their comrades; but a few well directed discharges from the Constitution, and the other vessels of the squadron, compelled them to retire. Decatur and Trippe were able to withdraw with their prizes.

In the two prizes of Decatur, thirty-three officers and men had been killed, and an unknown number driven overboard. Twenty-seven prisoners were taken, of whom nineteen were badly wounded. In the boat captured by Trippe with Midshipman Henly and nine seamen, fourteen of the enemy were killed, and twenty-two made prisoners, including seven badly wounded. Three others of their gunboats were sunk by shots from our squadron, and the greater part of their crews perished in the waves. A number of guns in their batteries were dismounted. Many of those who served them were killed; and, as the Constitution lay opposite to them, they were invariably silenced, but were manned with fresh troops, and opened again immediately after. The town itself was much injured by shells that fell into it, and by shot, and the inhabitants fled for safety to the open country. At half past four, the wind having drawn more into the harbor, Commodore Preble made the signal to retire from the action; and whilst the brigs, schooners, and boats, towed out the gunboats and their

prizes, he remained to cover them with the Constitution, after which he hauled off, having been two entire hours under the fire of the batteries.

Never was more gallant and effective service rendered by so inconsiderable a force. The plan of Preble in the attack was conceived with no less skill and hardihood, than it was coolly and courageously executed by all who took part in it.

The chivalrous gallantry displayed by Decatur in the capture of the Philadelphia was repeated by him, and by his heroic followers, with even greater brilliancy. There he surprised, in the dead of the night, and overwhelmed, an adversary, who, however superior in numbers, was panic stricken, and thus rendered powerless to resist. Now, he met the same foe, still immeasurably his superior, in the face of day, on his guard, completely prepared for resistance, and so confident as to quit his vantage ground; he met him, moreover, in hand to hand encounter, in which he was supposed to be most formidable, and in which, all advantage of skill and tactical science being thrown aside, the issue was committed to personal prowess alone. To the example of personal gallantry thus set by Decatur before Tripoli, and the chivalrous spirit communicated to his companions in arms, we may ascribe, in no small degree, that heroic tone, which has characterized all the after achievements of our navy, and will still continue, we may hope, to constitute the high-

est honor and best safeguard of the country in all time to come.

The battle over, the victory won, Decatur's whole duty to his country accomplished, the excitement which had stirred his bosom amidst such superhuman exertions gave place to an absorbing sense of his own private bereavement. The moment that he could be spared from duty, Commodore Preble, kindly entering into his feelings and sharing his sorrow, sent him in his barge to bring his brother on board the Constitution. James Decatur was still alive, but in extremity. He was carefully placed in the barge, his head sustained in the lap of Midshipman Charles Morris, the present distinguished Commodore of that name, whilst Stephen sat beside him, in vain pressing his hand and watching his eye for one token of fraternal recognition. Consciousness had departed ere life was extinct. In this way they were rowed rapidly towards the Constitution. He breathed his last before the boat reached her side. The sun, which had risen upon him in health, which had lighted him during the day in his career of glorious achievement, was just sinking to repose in the west, surrounded by a brilliant halo, which played upon and fitly illuminated the visage of the dying patriot. That sun would rise again on the morrow, not to gladden his vision, but to light him to a watery tomb.

For Stephen remained the sad office of aiding to prepare his brother James's remains for burial.

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Decently attired in the uniform which he had adorned, and covered with his country's banner, his body was raised upon shot boxes placed between two guns, on the after part of the main deck, forming the sailor's appropriate bier. That night, the vigils of Stephen Decatur over his brother's corse were shared by many a sympathizing companion, to whom his gentle demeanor had endeared him, and who joined in heartfelt sorrow over his untimely fate.

With what emotions of grief at his own loss, at that of his aged parents, who for months would still remain unconscious of their deprivation, to whom his must be the task of conveying the tidings of dismay, must Stephen have now contemplated the spectacle before him! Might he not, in the watchings of the night, have heard, in imagination, the wail of agony ringing through his father's halls, when the direful intelligence should be received? How tenderly Stephen loved his brother, how he would have cherished the faintest hope of recovery, and fanned the latent spark of life, had it not already been extinct, bears witness the reckless disregard of his own life, with which he rushed to avenge him. The model hero of the ancient poet, after remaining for weeks supine in his ship, "shaded by his sails," and sullenly brooding over a private wrong, was only aroused anew to patriotic exertion by the death of Patroclus. Decatur, no less brave, more patriotic than he, after victoriously accomplishing his whole duty

to his country, plunged once more, almost single handed, among his enemies to avenge a murdered brother.*

Yet the sorrow of Decatur was not unmingled with consoling pride and exultation at the heroism of his brother's death in the arms of victory, only snatched from him by the hand of treachery which struck him down. To Midshipman Charles Morris he remarked, whilst gazing on his brother's visage, "I would rather see him thus, than living with any cloud on his conduct." This was a sentiment more touching, because more true to nature, than the artificial joy which the Spartans were taught to exhibit when their relations fell in battle for their country.†

On the morning following the engagement in which James Decatur had fallen, the last sad rites were paid to his remains. Conducted to the gang-

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* With equal truth as to intention, with more as to result, Decatur might have uttered the exclamation of a hero of entirely kindred character, Graham of Montrose,

"I'll sing thy obsequies with trumpet sounds,
And write thy epitaph with blood and wounds."

† Xenophon relates that, after the massacre of a whole brigade of Spartans at Lechæum, Agesilaus marched thither with his army, and encamped on the scene of disaster. "Such a calamity," he says, "as the late one, being an unusual thing to Lacedemonians, a general dejection was visible throughout the camp, except in the persons whose sons, or fathers, or brothers, had died at their posts. These, indeed, as if they had gained a victory, walked up and down with a cheerful countenance, exulting in their own private misfortunes."

way of the Constitution, in solemn procession to the sound of funereal music, by his mourning brother and his scarcely less afflicted brethren in arms, they were committed to the spacious grave of the Mediterranean, with the sublime ceremonial of the church, in which he had been nurtured. Volleys of musketry pealed their appropriate requiem over the closing waters.

Later in the same day Commodore Preble promulgated to his squadron a general order, from which the following is taken. Being read over James Decatur's grave, that part of it which commemorates his heroism and laments his death may serve for his epitaph.

"The Commodore deeply regrets the death of the brave Lieutenant James Decatur, who nobly fell at the moment he had obliged an enemy of superior force to strike to him."

"The very distinguished judgment and intrepidity of Captain Decatur in leading his division of gunboats into action, in boarding, capturing, and bringing out from under the enemy's batteries two of their gunboats, each of superior force, is particularly gratifying to the Commodore; and Captain Decatur will please to accept his thanks."

CHAPTER VI.

Second Attack on Tripoli. — Exploit of Midshipmen Spence and Kennedy. — Decatur receives his Commission as Post Captain. — Sword voted to him by Congress. — Bashaw offers Terms of Peace. — Terms rejected. — Third Attack. — Fourth Attack. — Its destructive Effects. — Fifth Attack. — Intrepid fitted as a Fire Ship, commanded by Somers. — Peril of the Enterprise. — Explosion of the Intrepid. — Anxiety of the Squadron for the Fate of her Crew. — Their probable Fate. — Close of Operations before Tripoli. — Decatur, with Part of the Squadron, proceeds to Syracuse.

The recent daring attack on the Castle, batteries, and naval defences of Tripoli, had the effect of highly elevating our national character in the estimation of the Bashaw and his adherents, and of diminishing their confidence in their own resources and power. This was made known to Commodore Preble by a letter from the French Consul, in which he observed, that the attack had disposed the Bashaw to accept of reasonable terms of accommodation, and suggested the expediency of sending a boat on shore with a flag of truce, which Commodore Preble declined, as no white flag was displayed from the Bashaw's Castle. He had, however, previously signalized his mag-

nanimity by sending in, through the medium of a neutral vessel, fourteen badly wounded Tripolitans, to be restored to the care of their friends.

On the 7th of August, being the same day that he received the French Consul's letter suggesting that he should send a proposition to treat, he prepared to follow up the impression which he had made by a new attack. The gunboats had been augmented to the number of nine, by the addition of the three captured from the enemy, and which had been altered from lateen vessels to sloops. The new plan of Commodore Preble was to station the bombards and gunboats in a small bay, to the westward of the town, where but few of the enemy's guns could be brought to bear upon them, and whence they could attack the westernmost batteries at close quarters, and annoy the town with shot and shells. They were to be supported by the Siren and Vixen, whilst the Constitution, being too large to venture into that position, with the rest of the squadron, was to remain to windward, to keep the enemy's flotilla in check, and to cut them off, should they venture forth from behind the rocks to attack our gunboats.

At half past two, the vessels and flotilla had gained their designated stations, within point blank shot of the western batteries, when signal was made for the bombards and gunboats to commence the attack. This was executed with vigor, under a warm return from such of the enemy's

batteries as were within range. Some of the enemy's guns were served with hot shot; at half past three, one of them passed through the magazine of a prize gunboat, belonging to Decatur's division, and stationed near him. The after part of her immediately blew up, carrying all into the air, who were stationed on the quarter deck. By the explosion, Lieutenant James R. Caldwell, who commanded the boat, Midshipman John S. Dorsey, a sergeant of marines, and seven petty officers and seamen, were instantly killed, and six others wounded. So soon as the smoke blew away, Decatur observed that all abaft the mast was under water. The bow, though settling rapidly, was still afloat, and on it stood Midshipman Robert T. Spence, Gunner's mate Edward P. Kennedy, and ten brave seamen, the sole survivors of the crew, engaged in reloading their gun, which had been discharged the moment before the explosion. Coolly they completed their task, pointed and fired their gun, and gave three hearty American cheers as the boat sank from under them. It was now time for Midshipman Spence, the leader in this gallant exploit, to reflect that he could not swim. Grasping one of the gunboat's sweeps, as her shattered remains sank from under him, he succeeded in sustaining himself until rescued.

Young Kennedy and the seamen swam to the nearest boats. Considering their whole duty not yet performed, whilst anything remained to be

done, they took their stations at the guns on board the boats, which they reached, and lent their exertions in continuing the engagement. Nothing daunted by this terrific disaster, but encouraged rather by the spirit of those, who had survived it, and by the presence of Somers and Decatur, the cannonade was kept up with unabated vigor for two hours longer, from the remaining gunboats and from the bombards. Forty-eight shells were thrown into the town, and five hundred shot into the batteries. The batteries were almost entirely silenced, their guns nearly all dismounted, the gunners killed or driven from the battlements, and the walls themselves almost entirely destroyed.

At half past five, the wind having freshened from north-northeast so as to draw in the harbor, Commodore Preble made signal for the bombs and gunboats to retire from the action, which they had sustained at close quarters during three hours. Such was the result of the second attack on Tripoli, in which Decatur bore a distinguished part. He had again the misfortune to see a number of his countrymen perish by his side; Caldwell had been his brother midshipman in the United States; but they fell in fair fight, not cut off, like his brother, by the hand of treachery.

With the renewed thanks with which Commodore Preble welcomed him on board the Constitution, for his gallantry on this occasion, the veteran had also the gratification of communicat-

ing to him very pleasing intelligence. Commander Chauncey, in the John Adams, had arrived during the engagement, and Decatur was now enabled to learn the estimation in which his achievement in destroying the Philadelphia was held at home. The President of the United States had promptly responded to the suggestion of Preble, that Decatur should be at once promoted to a captaincy; and Preble had now the high gratification of presenting to Decatur his commission for that rank. To enhance the compliment, it bore date on the day of his achievement. The following letter from the Secretary of the Navy to Decatur accompanied and gave additional value to the boon. It was dated on the 22d of May, 1804.

"Sir; By despatches from Commodore Preble, it has been announced to us, that the destruction of the late frigate Philadelphia has been effected while lying in the harbor of Tripoli, under circumstances of extraordinary peril to the parties that achieved it. I find, Sir, that you had the command of this expedition.

"The achievement of this brilliant enterprise reflects the highest honor on all the officers and men concerned. You have acquitted yourself in a manner, which justifies the high confidence we have reposed in your valor and your skill. The President has desired me to convey to you his thanks for your gallant conduct on this occasion; and he likewise requests that you will, in his

name, thank each individual of your gallant band, for their honorable and valorous support, rendered the more honorable from its having been volunteered.

"As a testimonial of the President's high opinion of your gallant conduct in this instance, he sends you the enclosed commission."

On the assembling of Congress, the additional highest honor that a grateful country could bestow, was granted to Decatur by the following resolution;

"Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled, that the President of the United States be requested to present, in the name of Congress, to Captain Decatur, a sword, and to each of the officers and crew of the United States ketch Intrepid, two months' pay, as a testimony of the high sense entertained by Congress of the gallantry, good conduct, and services of Captain Decatur and the officers and crew of the said ketch, in attacking in the harbor of Tripoli, and destroying, a Tripolitan frigate of forty-four guns." *

If the generous nature of Decatur may have felt any alloy of pain mingling with the pleasure occasioned by his promotion, it was in passing over the heads of his gallant companions in arms, Lieutenants Stewart, Hull, Smith, and Somers, who commanded the other small vessels of the squadron. It had been his good fortune to be near the Com-

* See Remarks on this resolution in the Appendix.

modore when the capture of the Philadelphia by the Tripolitans was first known, and to have thus had the first opportunity to volunteer to destroy her. The fortune of war had favored him beyond his comrades, and thrown an opportunity of distinction in his way, of which he had nobly availed himself. It is believed, that all these gallant men acquiesced, with a generosity equal to their courage, in the promotion of Decatur. Lieutenant Isaac Chauncey, who was also Decatur's senior, is known to have urged his promotion on the navy department. The revival of the grade of commanders, soon after Decatur's promotion, made room for the advancement of all these gentlemen; and they also had occasion to rejoice in the arrival of the John Adams, which brought out their commissions. Other officers were likewise advanced a grade.

In consequence of the favorable report made by Decatur of the extraordinary gallantry displayed by Midshipman Spence, in continuing to load and fire the gun of his boat after she had been blown up, and was sinking from under him, Commodore Preble appointed him an acting lieutenant; and for the same cause, the gunner's mate, E. P. Kennedy, was appointed an acting midshipman. Mr. Kennedy was a young gentleman, who had been led by a spirit of adventure to adopt a sea life. He had met with more adventures, however, than were agreeable, having been impressed into the British navy, whence he had escaped at the risk of his life, by swimming more than a mile to the shore.

Enlisting under his own flag for the Tripolitan war, he found in it the means of honorable distinction, which he continued to win in every grade of his profession until he had attained the highest.

To Preble the John Adams brought the unwelcome tidings, that he was to be superseded in his command. The loss of the Philadelphia created a necessity for sending out additional force. It was contemplated to send out four frigates, the President, Congress, Essex, and Constellation. As there were only two captains that could be detailed for service, junior to Commodore Preble, it was thought necessary to send a senior, Commodore Samuel Barron, to supersede him in the command. One more frigate would have sufficed to enable Preble to bring the war with Tripoli effectually to a close. The John Adams was a ship of this class; but she had left the greater part of her main deck gun-carriages to come out in other ships of the squadron, in order to bring more stores and provisions. Under these circumstances, Preble determined to prepare everything for an attack the moment Commodore Barron should arrive, so that the war might be finished at a single blow. The only complaint he expressed to the government was in the following words; "I cannot but regret that our naval establishment is so limited, as to deprive me of the means and glory of completely subduing the haughty tyrant of Tripoli, whilst

in the chief command. It will, however, afford me satisfaction to give my successor all the assistance in my power."

On the 10th of August, the Bashaw offered, through the medium of the French Consul, to make peace, on the payment of five hundred dollars for each of his captives. This was a great reduction from his pretensions previous to the attacks on his batteries; payment had before been required for tribute, and a consideration for the termination of the war. The proposition was rejected.

As the season for bad weather was fast approaching, when the Bashaw would find in the dangers of his coast his best protection, and as many vessels of the squadron had been five months on this inhospitable coast without relief or relaxation, Commodore Preble, finding, on the 18th of August, that Commodore Barron had not arrived, determined to make a night attack with the force at his disposal. He sent Captains Decatur and Chauncey, in two small boats, to reconnoitre the harbor and observe the exact arrangement of the enemy's flotilla during the night, as they were in the habit of changing their positions. The officers returned at midnight, and reported that the flotilla was moored in a line abreast from the mole to the Bashaw's Castle, with the vessels' heads to the eastward, for the defence of the inner harbor. At daylight, the wind came on to blow freshly into the harbor, bringing in a heavy

sea, which compelled the squadron to weigh and get an offing.

It was only on the 24th, that the wind and weather again became favorable for an attack. The squadron anchored in the evening near the town, and the bomb vessels and gunboats, under Decatur, were sent in at midnight to bombard and cannonade the town. They opened their fire at two in the morning, and continued it until daylight, causing considerable injury to the town, and spreading a panic among the garrison and inhabitants.

The weather again became unfavorable, and continued so until the 28th, when Preble determined on another night attack, with the gunboats covered by the brigs and schooners of the squadron. The bombards were too much shattered to participate in this attack. At three o'clock in the morning, the gunboats, in two divisions, under Decatur and Somers, were brought to anchor, with springs on their cables, within pistol shot of the rocks, and opened a destructive cannonade on the shipping, town, batteries, and Bashaw's Castle. The brigs and schooners of the squadron kept under way, just without the line of gunboats, to cover and support them. So soon as returning daylight made it even moderately safe for the Constitution to venture among the perils of the neighborhood of the shore, this vessel stood in to cover the gunboats, and participate in the attack. At half past five, the Constitution

was within two cables' length of the rocks, when she commenced a heavy fire on thirteen of the enemy's gunboats and galleys, which were in close action with ours. One of the enemy's gunboats was instantly sunk, and two ran on shore to avoid sinking. The remainder retreated.

Signal was now made for our gunboats to retire from action, in tow of the brigs and schooners. They had been engaged two hours and a half, and had fired upwards of four hundred round shot, besides grape and canister, with good effect. The Constitution continued to run into the harbor, until within musket shot of the Crown and Mole batteries; when she hove to, and fired more than three hundred round shot, besides grape and canister, into the town, Bashaw's Castle, and batteries, silencing the Castle and two of the batteries for some time. At a quarter past six, the gunboats being all in tow, and out of gun shot, Commodore Preble hauled off in the Constitution, after she had lain in close action under the batteries three quarters of an hour.

By this attack, several vessels were sunk or damaged in the moles, three gunboats sunk or disabled, the town and batteries much injured, and many of the enemy killed and wounded. Its occurrence in the night and early morning added to the terror of the Tripolitans by showing them, that even the season of darkness and

repose furnished no protection from their intrepid and indefatigable enemies.

On the 3d of September, the wind being again easterly, and favorable both to approach and haul off from the town, preparations were made for another attack. The bomb vessels, having been repaired, were again in order for service. At half past two in the afternoon, Tripoli being two and a half miles off, signal was made for the bomb and gunboats to cast off their tow-lines, and advance to the attack. On this occasion, the enemy's galleys and gunboats were under way in the eastern part of the harbor, which Commodore Preble considered a judicious movement on their part, as it prevented our boats from going down to attack the town, without leaving the enemy's flotilla in their rear and to windward. Under these circumstances, the Commodore ordered the bombards to run down and anchor before the town, and fire their mortars, whilst the gunboats kept their wind, and engaged those of the enemy.

The bombs having gained their stations and commenced throwing shells at half past three, our gunboats, led in their usual gallant manner by Decatur and Somers, made a dash at those of the enemy. After sustaining and briskly returning our fire for a short time, they broke their line as our boats came within musket shot, and retreated within the rocks, under cover of their

batteries, apprehensive, probably, of a repetition of the hand to hand engagement, in which, with all their reputed skill in this mode of warfare, they had found themselves unequal to cope with the Americans. Our boats, covered by the brigs and schooners, pursued them to the edge of the reef, with whose channels our officers were unacquainted. One division of the boats now kept the enemy's flotilla in check, whilst the other attacked Fort English. The bomb vessels, which were throwing their shells briskly into the town, were now exposed to the fire of all the neighboring batteries, and in imminent danger of being sunk.

To prevent this catastrophe, Commodore Preble now ran the Constitution between them and the enemy, and hove to within reach of grape, in a position where seventy of the enemy's heavy cannon bore upon him. Whilst the bombards now threw their shells over the Constitution from a place of security, she discharged eleven broadsides in rapid succession into the town, batteries, and Bashaw's Castle, entirely silencing one of their batteries, and causing dreadful carnage everywhere. The Constitution, also, was much cut up in her sails and rigging. At half past four, the wind began to draw into the harbor and freshen. Commodore Preble immediately made the signal for the bombs and gunboats to withdraw in tow of the brigs and schooners. The bombs had thrown fifty shells into the town with good effect; the gunboats had fired four hundred round

shot, besides grape and canister; and the brigs and schooners, being near enough to use even their light carronades with effect, did considerable execution. One of the bombards had shattered her mortar bed, and was so near sinking as to be saved with difficulty.

The season at which active operations could be prosecuted on this inhospitable coast being nearly over, Commodore Preble determined to close his brilliant series of attacks by sending a fire ship, or infernal, into the harbor of Tripoli, to destroy the shipping, and shatter the Bashaw's Castle and town. The Intrepid was selected for this purpose. One hundred barrels of powder, and one hundred and fifty fixed shells, were stowed on board of her. The fusees leading to the magazine were calculated to burn a quarter of an hour, to give time to those who conducted the vessel to reach a place of safety after lighting them. In another part of the vessel, a mass of splinters and combustibles was collected, to be lighted at the same time as the fusees, and which, by making a quick and vivid blaze, was intended to deter the enemy from attempting to board her, ere she had gained the destined point of explosion.

Decatur's early and attached friend, the chivalrous Somers, having volunteered for this service, was appointed to the command, assisted by Lieutenants Wadsworth and Israel, and ten seamen, all of whom had volunteered for the service. Two

of the fastest rowing boats of the squadron were appointed to accompany the Intrepid, and bring back her crew. At eight o'clock in the evening of the 4th of September, the Intrepid got under sail, and stood into the harbor of Tripoli with a leading breeze from the eastward. The Argus, Vixen, and Nautilus, convoyed her as far as the rocks, and hovered in that neighborhood, to watch the sequel of the enterprise, and pick up the boats on their return from their adventure.

This was a service in itself surrounded with peril. But the anxious interest of the spectators was the more intensely excited from knowing the fixed determination not to be captured, with which Somers and his companions had set out on an enterprise in itself so full of hazard. They had indulged the confident hope of entering the harbor unperceived by the enemy, but had declared, if the enemy should board them before they reached their destined point, in the midst of the shipping and batteries, in such force as to leave them no hope of making good their retreat, they would apply a match to the magazine, and blow themselves and their enemies up together; being determined, as there was no exchange of prisoners, that their country should never pay ransom for them, nor they be the means of furnishing the enemy with a supply of powder, which he greatly needed.

From their position off the entrance of the harbor, the officers and crew of the Argus, Vixen, and Nautilus, watched the progress of the Intrepid,

and the gallant band that conducted her, with intense anxiety. It was soon obvious that she had been discovered by the enemy, by a cannonade being opened on her from the nearest batteries. Soon after, the whole scene was lighted up for a moment with noonday brilliancy; earth, sea, and heaven were shaken with the terrors of the explosion; the hull, spars, and rigging of the Intrepid were thrown into the air, and the bursting shells, as they fell thick on every side, mingled their reports with the shrieks of the terrified Tripolitans. In a moment, darkness and silence resumed their mastery over the scene, affording to the anxious watchers no clew to the fate of their companions. The fact of the explosion having occurred before the vessel had reached her destination, without being preceded by the concerted lighting of the fire, which was to serve at once as a terror to the Tripolitans, and to our countrymen as a signal that thus far all had gone well, gave reason to apprehend the worst. Still, while any uncertainty remained, those who, a few moments before, had parted from their adventurous comrades in health, and in the expectation of glorious success, could not bring themselves to believe that they were so suddenly numbered with the dead.

Throughout the night, every ear and eye was painfully on the alert to catch some tidings of the missing. Officers and crews hung over the hammock cloths, intently looking towards the scene of disaster. Some, suspending themselves from

the sides of the vessels, with lanterns level with the water, hoped that their glancing rays would sooner reveal the object of their earnest search. In darkness and silence, the senses of the eager watcher are easily deceived. Those who watched on this occasion often imagined that they saw the dark forms of coming boats, and glancing oars, or heard their distant jar in the row-lock.

But morning came without the adventurers, and all hope for their safety was converted into despair. One of the largest of the enemy's gunboats had disappeared, and three others were seen much shattered, which the enemy was hauling on shore. From this circumstance Commodore Preble was led to the belief, that these boats had been detached as an advanced guard from the enemy's flotilla to intercept the Intrepid, and that the missing boat had suddenly boarded her, without suspecting her to be a fire ship; when the heroic Somers and his followers, seeing the other boats around him, and no prospect of executing their project and escaping, resolved to prefer death, with the destruction of many of the enemy, to captivity, coupled with the consequence of placing him in possession of a valuable prize; and, determined to perish for their country, since that was the only service they could now render her, putting a match to the magazine, gloriously terminated their existence.

Somers and Decatur had entered the service together, as midshipmen, on board the United States. They had served as shipmates and famil-

iar companions in every grade. Brought in constant contact as brother officers, as messmates, and in the occasional relaxations from duty on shore, they became knit together with an earnest and enthusiastic attachment, confirmed and strengthened by a participation in the same scenes of danger and glory, and by a community of feelings, sympathies, and heroism. The catastrophe, which suddenly broke this tie at a moment when Decatur had hoped to greet the victorious return of his friend, decorated with new trophies won in the same Intrepid, which had been so fruitful of glory to himself, was felt by Decatur as an overwhelming calamity. His feelings could not now seek that outlet of relief, which a month before he had found in rushing to avenge the murder of his brother. The war was over for the season, and nothing remained for him but inactive and unavailing grief.

On the 7th of September, the weather having become boisterous, and the ammunition of the squadron being so reduced as only to afford a supply for the vessels necessary to maintain the blockade, Commodore Preble ordered the mortars, guns, and ammunition, to be removed from the bomb and gunboats, to the Constitution and John Adams, and despatched the John Adams, together with the Siren, Nautilus, Enterprise, and Scourge, having the bomb and gunboats in tow, to Syracuse. Decatur, still remaining in the Enterprise, until an arrangement could be made more

conformable to his present rank, went as senior officer of this force to Syracuse. There he passed a brief season of repose from the scenes of excitement, in which he had been so absorbingly engaged.

CHAPTER VII.

Arrival of Commodore Barron to take Command. — Preble leaves Tripoli. — Sends Decatur to Malta to take Command of the Constitution. — Arrival at Syracuse. — Takes Command of the Congress. — Squadron reappears off Tripoli. — Peace concluded. — Decatur proceeds to Tunis. — Receives on board the Tunisian Ambassador. — Arrival at Washington. — Returns to his Home. — Reception by his Countrymen.

On the 10th of September, Commodore Samuel Barron arrived before Tripoli, with two ships of his squadron, the President and Constellation. Commodore Preble immediately transferred the command of the squadron to his successor, and determined, with his approbation, to return home in the John Adams, and relinquish the command of the Constitution to Captain Decatur. In mentioning this arrangement to the navy department, Commodore Preble took occasion to say, "The

service in this quarter cannot suffer, as Captain Decatur is at present without a ship, and my return will immediately place him in the exercise of the duties attached to that commission, which he has so gallantly earned, and his country generously bestowed. I shall feel a pleasure in leaving the Constitution under the command of that officer, whose enterprising and manly conduct I have often witnessed, and whose merits eminently entitle him to so handsome a command."

As the Constitution required to be calked and refitted, Commodore Preble proceeded with her to Malta, where he took leave of the brave officers and crew, who had stood so nobly by his side in his various attacks on Tripoli, and crossed to Syracuse in the Argus. From that place, he despatched Captain Decatur, in the Argus, to Malta, to take command of the Constitution, which he assumed towards the close of September.* The command of the frigate Constitution

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* The following is Commodore Preble's gratifying order to Decatur, dated at Syracuse, 24th September, 1804.

"You will please to repair to Malta, in the Argus, and, on your arrival there, take command of the United States ship Constitution, at anchor in that harbor, prepare, with all possible expedition, for a cruise of three months, and proceed, off Tripoli, to join the squadron blockading that coast, under command of Commodore Samuel Barron.

"I am happy that my supersedure in the command of the squadron, and consequent return to the United States, affords me an opportunity of placing you immediately in the exercise of the duties attached to that commission, which you have so

at twenty-five! Such was the splendid reward which his country had bestowed on his genius, valor, and devotion to her cause. In the British navy, the favored members of the aristocracy are sometimes seen filling commands equally important at as early an age. But Decatur owed his early advancement to his own merit alone, which we have the authority of Preble for saying "eminently entitled him to so handsome a command."

The fitness of Decatur for the proud station, which he had won, was not merely recognized by his veteran commander, by his brother officers, and by a grateful country. If his name was pronounced with terror on the African coast of the Mediterranean, on the opposite shores, where a common exposure to the piracies and kidnapping expeditions of the Barbary regencies rendered them a dreaded and universal enemy,

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gallantly earned, and your country thus generously bestowed. I feel a peculiar pleasure in leaving the Constitution under the command of an officer, whose enterprise and manly conduct in battle I have so often witnessed, and whose merit eminently entitles him to so handsome a command. May you ever continue in the pursuit of glory, and be crowned with success."

In compliance with this order, Decatur took passage for Malta in the Argus; the sense of his good fortune doubtless not a little heightened by the reflection that, less than a year before, he had given up to his senior officer, as being too large a command for him, this sixteen gun brig, which was now conveying him to assume the command of a frigate of the heaviest class.

the name of Decatur, signalized by such heroic efforts to humble these scourges of Christendom, was hailed with enthusiastic admiration. At Naples, Decatur was hailed by the title of "Terror of the Foe."* The Pope, as the father of Christendom, is said to have declared publicly, in allusion to the efforts of Preble, Decatur, and their brave associates, that "the United States, though in their infancy, had done more to humble the anti-christian barbarians on the African coast, than all the European states had done for a long period of time."

Malta being nearest to the scene of war, and having had frequent intercourse with the squadron, which drew its supplies of water, provisions, and refreshments chiefly from that place, its authorities and people were familiarly acquainted with the brilliant series of exploits, which had occurred so near to them, stamped by a character of chivalrous daring, which called to mind the hand to hand struggles, in the same neighborhood and against the same foe, of those Knights of St. John, whose memory is kept alive in Malta by so many monuments of their magnificence and power. In Sir Alexander Ball, the heroic Governor of Malta, the tried friend and companion of Nelson at the Nile and elsewhere, Decatur found a worthy admirer. The following record

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* Recorded by Captain R. T. Spence, who was at Naples when intelligence arrived there of the burning of the Philadelphia.

remains of the impression made upon this veteran by the character of our struggle with Tripoli. It is contained in a letter of this period to Commodore Preble.

"I beg to repeat my congratulations on the services you have rendered to your country, and the hair-breadth escapes you have had in setting so distinguished an example to your countrymen, whose bravery and enterprise cannot fail to mark the character of a great and rising nation, in a manner that will be ultimately attended with the best and most important consequences to your country. If I were to offer my humble opinion, it would be, that you have done well in not purchasing a peace with money. A few brave men have been sacrificed; and I conceive it better to risk more lives, than to submit to terms which might encourage the Barbary States to add fresh demands and insults."

By the generous zeal of this veteran, Decatur received every required aid in completing the repairs of his ship, whilst his leisure was enlivened by personal kindness and hospitality. It was probably at Sir Alexander's table, that Decatur made the acquaintance of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the poet, who at that time filled the station of secretary to the Governor, made vacant in the unfortunate encounter with Joseph Bainbridge. The strong impression made by Decatur on this celebrated man is sufficiently evinced, by his citing in conversation, nearly thirty years afterwards, in

confirmation of a political axiom of his own, an opinion at this time expressed by Decatur. "A nation, to be great," said Coleridge, "ought to be compressed in its increment by nations more civilized than itself, as Greece by Persia, and Rome by Etruria, the Italian states, and Carthage. I remember Commodore Decatur saying to me at Malta, that he deplored the occupation of Louisiana by the United States, and wished that province had been possessed by England. He thought that, if the United States got hold of Canada by conquest or cession, the last chance of the United States becoming a great compact nation would be lost." *

When this conversation took place, Coleridge was a feeble valetudinarian, seeking, in the climate of

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* This opinion might be true, if the chief object were to make a great military and conquering nation, like those enumerated by Coleridge; but not to form a peaceful and happy one like our own, drawing the sword only for self-defence, and having the nobler aim to extend over the widest possible space of the unappropriated regions of our continent countless millions of human beings in the enjoyment of plenty, freedom, and the blessings of civilization. The motives against the extension of our territory, deduced from the remoteness of the parts from each other, which existed when Decatur expressed his opinion, have been removed by the application of steam to intercommunication on land and water, by which distance has been in a measure annihilated, and the shores of the Pacific brought as near our present capital now, as the eastern extremity of our territory was at the time Decatur made his remark. Such have been the triumphs of human ingenuity in the last half century. What will seem strange to our successors in 1900?

Malta, a respite from pain and a renovation of his vital powers, whilst Decatur had just entered on the season of manhood, full of health, and hope, and honors already nobly won. Yet Coleridge lived to repeat the conversation of Decatur many years after he had become the tenant of a hapless grave.

Decatur, having completed the repairs of the Constitution, and having, in the mean time, received new orders from Commodore Barron, who had touched at Malta, proceeded with her to join the squadron, which, with the exception of a few vessels engaged in keeping up the blockade of Tripoli, was assembled at Syracuse. Here he was transferred, by order of Commodore Barron, to the Congress frigate of thirty-six guns, and Captain John Rodgers, who was Decatur's senior, relieved him on board the Constitution, which was of the same size and force as the President, and larger than the other ships of the squadron. Decatur found Commodore Preble still at Syracuse, engaged in the settlement of the extensive accounts for the expenditures of his squadron. Before the departure of the veteran for his home, Decatur joined with his brother officers of the old squadron in an affectionate farewell letter to their revered chief.

As an evidence of the perfect harmony and singleness of purpose, with which the officers of this squadron had coöperated together in the service of their country, it may not be out of place

here to adduce a circumstance mentioned by Commodore Preble, in his closing report to the navy department on the relinquishment of his command, and which involves the highest eulogium of both the Commodore and his officers; proving, as it does, that the discipline was steady, yet paternal; that regularity and order prevailed; that the Commodore was firm, judicious, and consistent, and the officers attentive, zealous, cheerfully obedient, and respectful to their superiors and to each other. "It affords me much satisfaction," he says, "to observe, that we have neither had a duel nor a court-martial in the squadron since we left the United States."

On the arrival of Commodore Preble in the United States, he received the thanks of Congress, and the President was directed to cause a gold medal to be struck, emblematical of his attacks on the town, batteries, and naval force of Tripoli. Swords were at the same time voted to the commissioned and warrant officers, who distinguished themselves in the attacks, and a month's extra pay to "the petty officers, seamen, and marines, who so gloriously supported the honor of the American flag, under the orders of their gallant commander." This resolution conferred on Decatur the second sword received from his country, for his achievements in the Tripolitan war. Nor were the claims of the honored dead, who had offered up their lives on the altar of patriotism, forgotten. The President

was requested to communicate to their parents, or nearest relatives, "the deep regret which Congress feels for the loss of those gallant men, whose names ought to live in the recollection and affection of a grateful country, and whose conduct ought to be regarded as an example to future generations."

Although Commodore Preble, in giving up the command of the squadron, which he had so often led to victory, could not avoid expressing to the navy department his natural regret, that our naval establishment was so limited as to deprive him of the means and glory of terminating the war with Tripoli, and liberating his captive countrymen, who had been taken in the Philadelphia, yet he had in fact effected this before he was superseded. The enemy was subdued and humbled; the war was substantially at an end, though no treaty of peace had yet been negotiated.

Beyond a rigid maintenance of the blockade, no further active hostilities took place, the season of winter, and the tempestuous character of the coast, precluding any renewed attacks on the shipping and batteries. With a lively recollection, then, of the manner in which the war had been carried on by Commodore Preble, and his apprehensions quickened by the knowledge that five frigates were now ready to attack his batteries instead of one, and that one of these five frigates was commanded by Decatur, the Bashaw wisely anticipated the return of the season for renewing

active operations, by intimating his disposition to relinquish his former exactions, and negotiate on terms that might prove admissible. Nor was the daring and romantic adventure of General Eaton without its influence in making the Bashaw of Tripoli anxious for peace. That gentleman, formerly one of our Consuls in Barbary, had suggested a plan for creating a military diversion within the territories of the Bashaw, by supporting the lawful Bashaw Hamet Caramalli, who had been deposed by his younger brother Iusef, in an attempt to recover his authority. General Eaton, accompanied by Lieutenant O'Bannon, of the marines, and Midshipmen Mann and Danielson, had joined Hamet in Egypt, and, marching with him across the desert of Barca, at the head of a motley horde of adventurers, had taken Derne, a considerable fortified seaport of the regency, by assault.

Mr. Nissen, the Danish Consul at Tripoli, whose benevolent efforts to alleviate the sufferings of the captives of the Philadelphia won for him the solemn thanks of Congress, conveyed to Commodore Barron, in March, 1805, his belief that a treaty might now be concluded. In May following, Commodore Barron was compelled by ill health to relinquish the command of the squadron to the next in rank, Commodore John Rodgers, who had, as we have seen, exchanged ships with Decatur, and who now hoisted his flag on board the Constitution, off Tripoli, where he received

the order to assume the command of the squadron assembled before that port.

On the 3d of June, 1805, Colonel Lear, who had been duly empowered for that purpose, concluded a treaty of peace with Tripoli, on board the Constitution. It stipulated for a mutual exchange of prisoners; and, as the unfortunate loss of the Philadelphia had left about two hundred Americans more in the power of the Bashaw, than we had captured of his subjects, sixty thousand dollars were paid to the Bashaw, as an equivalent for the residue of the Americans. Christian captives were so much an object of barter with the Barbary powers, that there might have been some difficulty in inducing the Bashaw to part with the excess of his prisoners, over and above the number exchanged, without an equivalent in money. Another attack would have doubtless compelled unconditional compliance; but the negotiator decided to make peace on those terms.

Two years earlier, before the crew of the Philadelphia had fallen into the hands of the Bashaw, he had demanded, as the conditions of peace, two hundred thousand dollars, and the expenses of the war. He had subsequently demanded from Commodore Preble, at the commencement of his operations, three hundred and fifty thousand dollars, in addition to five hundred dollars for each of his captives. The present terms were therefore greatly more advantageous, though it would have been more satisfactory to have brought the war

to a close without the payment of money. Nothing was paid for arrears of tribute, and no provision was made by the treaty for its future continuance.

On the conclusion of peace, the Bashaw hoisted the American flag, under a salute of twenty-one guns, which was immediately returned by a like number from the Constitution, in compliment to the flag of Tripoli.

Soon after, the American prisoners, to the number of more than three hundred, were released from a captivity of twenty months' duration, and received once more under the protection of the flag of their country, with a hearty welcome to the hospitality and kindness of their deliverers. As no one had contributed more effectively to this happy consummation than Decatur, so no one welcomed it with heartier joy. Among those, who were thus brought once more into communion with friends and country, and placed again in the career of distinction, occur the honored and memorable names of William Bainbridge, David Porter, Jacob Jones, and James Biddle.

On the termination of the war with Tripoli, the squadron repaired to Syracuse, to procure supplies, refresh the weary prisoners, and make arrangements for their future comfort and disposal. Information was soon after received, that the Bey of Tunis was dissatisfied at our squadron having captured three Tunisian vessels, which had attempted to break the blockade of Tripoli, and had threatened to

declare war against us if his vessels were not released. Commodore Rodgers refused by letter to give up the vessels, which had been legally captured for an infraction of blockade. The Bey, who neither knew nor cared anything about the laws of blockade, but who had an exaggerated idea of his own consequence, told our Consul, that "America was the first power that had ever captured a Tunisian cruiser in full peace, the first that had ever offered unprovoked insults to Hamouda Bashaw. You have seen what has been accorded to me by Spain, Sweden, and Denmark, whose local situation and maritime force render them more formidable enemies than the United States. Your Commodores have done me great and repeated injuries, for the last of which my political existence forces me to insist on a proper reparation."

To assist the comprehension of the Bey, and repress the explosion of his wrath, Commodore Rodgers now despatched Decatur in advance to Tunis, with the Congress and brig Vixen, proposing soon to follow himself with the rest of the squadron. The duties of Decatur, until Commodore Rodgers should arrive, were merely those of observation and precaution. When not on shore, he passed much of his leisure time in pulling about the harbor in his barge, amusing himself with his gun. On one of these occasions, he saw on the water a very remarkable fish, more like a devil-fish than anything else he had seen. His fond-

ness for natural history, which subsequently led to his making a very rare and valuable collection of marine animals, made him very desirous to possess this novel specimen. He pulled near, fired, and struck the animal, which sunk in shoal water, where it could be seen on the bottom. Decatur, eager to secure his prize, asked Reuben James, who was his cockswain, to dive down and bring it up. Reuben hesitated, and replying, "I don't like to trouble that chap; he looks as if he would make an ugly customer," declined the unprofitable exploit. Decatur immediately went over himself, and soon brought the strange monster to the surface. It should be remembered that, though Decatur was captain of a frigate, he was yet a young man, with a young man's love of enterprise and adventure.

On the 1st of August, Commodore Rodgers arrived at Tunis with the frigates Constitution, Constellation, Essex, and John Adams, brig Siren, schooners Nautilus and Enterprise, sloop Hornet, and a number of gunboats. On the following day, he wrote to the Bey to announce his arrival, and to ask his decision, within thirty-six hours, as to whether the relations of the two countries were to be peace or war, announcing his intention to commence active hostilities, at the end of that time, should the reply be unsatisfactory. Decatur was also sent on shore to coöperate with the Consul, in obtaining from the Bey a guarantee for his faithful observance of the treaty, if he was determined to

remain at peace. The Bey refused to receive Decatur in the character of a negotiator; and Decatur, instantly declining to visit him in any other, withdrew in his boat to report the result of his mission. The moment Decatur's departure was known to the Bey, his mind was carried forward probably to what would be the character of the next visit of Decatur, whose name and fame were well known to him. His views and feelings underwent so sudden a revulsion, that he wrote and despatched a letter to Commodore Rodgers, expressing his determination faithfully to observe the existing treaty, so quickly that it was received before Decatur got on board of the Constitution.

The Bey soon after waved his demand for the immediate restitution of his captured vessels, and proposed to send an ambassador to the United States, to make a personal appeal to the President of the United States, giving his word of honor, as a prince, that he would commit no act of hostility, and in no way change the existing peaceful relations, until the issue of the mission should be known. Thus ended the expected rupture with Tunis; and it was remarked by the foreign consuls at that regency, that "no other nation had ever negotiated with the present Bey on such honorable terms;" an issue due to the force, which Commodore Rodgers had assembled before the port of Tunis, to his own spirited conduct, and in no slight degree to the name which our navy had established for itself, in the war with

Tripoli, through the exertions of Preble, Decatur, and their chivalrous associates.

The Congress was ordered by Commodore Rodgers to carry home the Tunisian Ambassador. Decatur, after an active cruise of two years in the Mediterranean, sailed from Tunis in September, and, touching at Algiers, proceeded thence to the Chesapeake Bay, and, ascending the Potomac, landed the Tunisian Ambassador at Washington.* The Ambassador's request for the release of the Tunisian vessels captured by our squadron off

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* An incident happened, while the Congress frigate was at anchor in Hampton Roads, which may properly be mentioned in this place. A schooner, returning to Norfolk with a sailing party, anchored near the frigate. Some of the party desired to visit the Tunisian Ambassador, and the African curiosities, which he was bringing as a present from the Bey. Neither Decatur nor the Ambassador was on board; the ladies examined the curiosities, and reposed in the cabin. Nothing interested them more, than a highly finished Italian miniature of the youthful and handsome captain. The father of Miss Wheeler, who was of the party, was Mayor of Norfolk. On the following day, Decatur came, with the Tunisian, to make him a visit of ceremony. They dined with the Mayor, and the society of Norfolk were assembled, in the evening, at a ball, to honor the visitors. Decatur was at once attracted by the mingled beauty, grace, and elegance of his host's daughter; nor was the lady backward in discovering, that the Italian artist had done even less than justice to the attractions of the young hero. It is believed that the spark of love was already kindled at that moment in the bosoms of both, only to be extinguished by death.

In a subsequent part of the narrative, Decatur's being assigned to the Norfolk station may be fairly attributed to the attraction of the Mayor's daughter.

Tripoli, for an infraction of blockade, was readily granted, as an act of grace, by the President; but a subsequent demand of a present of naval stores for the Bey, as the price of peace for three years, was as promptly refused. The Bey had the good sense not to allow this refusal to interrupt the existing peace.

Having dismantled the Congress, and discharged her crew, Decatur was relieved from duty, and repaired at once to his father's residence in the neighborhood of Philadelphia. At Washington, and everywhere on the route where he was recognized, Decatur awakened a warm interest and admiration, and received the heartiest greetings. So unconscious was he of the hold, which his brilliant actions had given him on the affections of his countrymen, that their demonstrations of respect, instead of being received by him as a merited homage, rather occasioned him embarrassment. In passing through Philadelphia, he lodged at the house of a friend in Front Street, near which he had long resided in his boyhood. Captain Duane, who commanded a military corps, called the Hibernia Greens, learning where Decatur was, paraded his company in front of the house, and greeted him with cheers and music.

The familiarity of surrounding scenes, amid which Decatur so shortly before had wandered a boy, and the sudden contrast of his new position, as revealed to him by an enthusiastic hom-

age, which his modesty prevented him from appropriating as a just reward of merit, for a moment overcame Decatur with an embarrassment, which he had not felt in the presence of the foe. When urged by his friend to present himself, and make some acknowledgment of the compliment paid him, he remarked, "I cannot; it is impossible; if it were anywhere but about here in Front Street, where everybody knows who Steph. Decatur was, I might do it." It was only after some difficulty, that he was prevailed on to present himself, and express his acknowledgments.

If Decatur's reception by the public was enthusiastic, with what a tenfold interest and affection must he have been welcomed back to the arms of his parents, crowned at so early an age with the highest honors that a generous country could bestow! How acutely must his presence have called to mind the untimely fate of that brother, who had fallen, not unhonored nor unrevenged! And how strangely and how tenderly must contending emotions of pride, joy, and sorrow, have struggled for mastery in the bosoms of the venerable pair!

Shortly after the return of Decatur, his schoolmates and early associates united in offering him the honor of a public entertainment. The feeling that prompted it, and the strong personal attachment that he must early have awakened in those who knew him best, are forcibly manifested in the following address.

"Upon an occasion like the present, we cannot forbear an expression of the feelings excited by your presence among us. The applause of one's country has ever been esteemed the most grateful reward of distinguished actions. The expectation of it is the spring of honorable minds, and the best incentive to enterprise and glory. To you is that applause now justly given. Upon the shores of a distant land you have recorded the first testimonials of your country's honor. That country welcomes your return to her bosom. She hails you as one of her favorite sons. To the general voice of admiration ours is zealously united. But with that alone *we* are not satisfied. We, your immediate fellow-citizens, the friends and companions of your recent youth, mingle, with the praises of a whole nation, feelings that are more endearing, feelings of the warmest personal attachment and esteem. Continue the illustrious career you have begun. Our congratulations will ever wait on your renown; our fondest wishes will ever be with you; and at each return to your native city, our admiring hearts will open, as they now do, to cherish and receive you."

To which Decatur thus modestly replied; "To be thought worthy of the applause of my countrymen impresses me with the liveliest sense of gratitude. But on the present occasion, when I look round and see myself surrounded by the companions of my earliest youth, my feelings are

such as cannot be expressed. I have only to offer you, whose good opinion is particularly dear to me, my warmest thanks, with my assurances, that, if an opportunity should again be afforded me, I will endeavor to merit, in some degree, the high opinion you have been pleased to express."

During this entertainment, a touching incident occurred, to which reference, as we shall see, was long after made, when Decatur had fulfilled his pledge to his young associates to "endeavor to merit" their good opinion. Stephen Decatur, the elder, being seated at the table between Stephen and his younger son John, whom he had devoted to the naval service, in the place of the one who had fallen, was complimented, in proposing his health, on the benefits he had conferred upon his country, by his own valued services to it, and by bestowing on it such sons; one of whom had fallen for his country, whilst another had returned victorious in her cause. The venerable man responded with the Spartan sentiment, "Our children are the property of their country." The sentiment, the tone in which it was uttered, tremulous with contending emotions of pride and grief, the unbidden tear that trickled down the cheek of the patriot, all asserted the mastery of an eloquence pitched to the key-tone of nature. The company burst into tears.

CHAPTER VIII.

Reduction of the Navy. — French and English Spoliations. — Construction of Gunboats. — Decatur appointed to a Command in the Chesapeake. — His Marriage. — Takes Command of the Gosport Navy Yard. — The Leopard attacks the Chesapeake. — Sensation occasioned by this Occurrence. — Court of Inquiry. — Decatur ordered on the Court Martial.

Our war with Tripoli was scarcely brought to a close when the navy, which, in winning peace, had covered itself and the nation with honor, was almost entirely laid aside, as a no longer necessary encumbrance. At the period fixed upon for disarming the navy, the annual value of our exports, imports, and tonnage engaged in transporting them, and in the fisheries, fell little short of two hundred and fifty millions of dollars. A very slight percentage on these enormous values, employed in an active naval force, would have secured their unmolested transit.

In the message, which President Jefferson had addressed to Congress just after the close of the Tripolitan war, he complained that the public armed ships of the two great belligerents of the time, France and England, hovered about our coast and harbors, under pretence of seeking their enemies, to the great annoyance and oppres-

sion of our trade; whilst their private armed cruisers committed piratical acts beyond the authority of their commissions, capturing in our waters, and even within the entrance of our harbors, the vessels of our friends, and even our own, carrying them off under pretence of legal adjudication; and, not daring to resort even to their own prejudiced courts, plundering and sinking them on the high seas, maltreating the crews, and in some cases abandoning them without provisions in the open ocean. As the chief means for averting these evils, the President recommended the fortification of our harbors, and the construction and equipment of a competent number of gunboats to protect their mouths.

By way of response to this humiliating tale of wrong and indignities, Congress, in April, 1806, conceded to the President authority to keep as many of the frigates and other vessels in commission as he might deem necessary, provided the whole number of seamen, ordinary seamen, and boys, should not exceed nine hundred and twenty-eight. As this number little exceeded those already employed in the Mediterranean and the Mississippi, no further equipment could be made to protect us from these insulting aggressions. The law provided that the officers, for whom there was no active employment, should be placed on half-pay. Many of the officers received furloughs and sought employment for a support in the merchant service. Whilst thus occupied on the high seas, the vessels in which they sailed were not unfrequently mo-

lested, and the flag of their country subjected to indignities, from which they would gladly have been employed in protecting it by the guns of our cruisers.

The same act of Congress, which rendered the employment of ships for the defence of our commerce impossible, in conformity with the President's recommendation, provided for the construction of fifty gunboats. This description of naval force had its origin in the year 1803, when the construction of fifteen gunboats was authorized to protect our right to the navigation of the Mississippi, the outlet of which was then in possession of Spain. In the following years, the number was augmented to forty. The events of Tripoli, where the gunboats, adapted to the circumstances and localities, had certainly been useful, had aided other causes in bringing this species of force into favor for the defence of our coast.

But the attempt to substitute it for a cruising navy, which could render all the services for coast defence that the gunboats could do, at greatly inferior expense, and other services at a distance from our shores, of which the gunboats were incapable, seemed little short of fatuity. The expensive nature of this armament, as compared with its capacity for annoyance, may be understood from the fact, that, whilst twenty-five gunboats, mounting together twenty-five guns, cost as much for construction and equipment as a frigate mounting fifty-six guns, say two hundred and twenty-one

thousand dollars; ten gunboats required as many officers and men, and as great an annual sum to maintain them in commission, as a fifty-six gun frigate, that is, one hundred and twenty thousand dollars. Thus a frigate was more than twice as formidable as gunboats of equal cost, and more than five times as formidable as gunboats costing an equal sum to maintain them in active service.

Another serious objection to the substitution consisted in the fact, that, whilst our cruising ships brought the officers together in considerable numbers, and carried them to the open ocean, where alone their profession could be acquired, and brought them into contact with foreign navies, thereby affording the means of comparison and improvement, the gunboat service, isolating them in numbers too small for discipline, and confining them to harbors, encouraged idleness and dissipation. It was alike unsuited to form the seaman, the officer, or the man of good habits and correct tastes. Under it the navy could not but retrograde in morals, tone, and capacity.

Such being the new character in which our rulers had determined that our navy should now exhibit itself, it only remained for Decatur, who was among the number of officers kept in active service, to acquit himself of the new duty assigned him to the best of his ability. He was appointed to command a squadron of gunboats stationed in the waters of the Chesapeake, and assiduously labored to introduce such order, sys-

tem, and discipline, into his command, as to qualify it to render the utmost service of which it was capable.

Norfolk being the rendezvous of Decatur's flotilla, he was thrown much in contact with the agreeable society of that place, where he had made the acquaintance of Miss Susan Wheeler, the only child of an intelligent and wealthy merchant there. In addition to a commanding beauty, which had rendered her celebrated both at Norfolk and in the more extended society of Washington, this young lady possessed great superiority of intellect, which a careful education and the contact of society had remarkably developed; nor had the lighter graces that embellish beauty and intellect been neglected in her training. She possessed many rare accomplishments, being, in particular, an admirable musician, and accompanying herself on the harp in singing with equal taste and execution.

That Decatur, brought within the influence of these manifold attractions, should not have been insensible to them, is not strange. Nor is it strange that the lady should have been pleased by the homage of a young hero, whose spirit was enshrined in form and features so worthy of his fame. A mutual attachment resulted from a prolonged observation of each other's character. When Decatur at length felt justified, by a prospect of success, in offering himself to Miss Wheeler, he is said to have remarked, that, before he had

the happiness of knowing her, he had already made vows to his country, and if he proved unfaithful to his country, he would be unworthy of her; but if she could be satisfied with the second place in his devotion, it should be hers exclusively and forever. On these terms, so well suited to ennoble him in the estimation of the high spirited woman, whom he loved, he was accepted; and his devotion, subordinate always to his paramount duty to his country, is said to have been all that the most craving heart could desire.

The marriage, thus resolved on, took place on the 8th of March, 1806, and, founded as it was on an entire sympathy of views and feelings, promoted in an eminent degree the happiness of both, whilst it is said to have had a marked influence in still further elevating the character, refining the tastes, and developing the vigorous intellect of Decatur; at the same time rather increasing than abating his aspirations for glory. The friends of Decatur recognized in this new tie, by which he had bound himself, the happy effects of a well assorted union, in which the judgment sanctioned what the heart had resolved.

For some months after his marriage, Decatur resided with his father-in-law. He was then ordered to Newport, in Rhode Island, to superintend the construction of some additional gunboats intended for his command. Mrs. Decatur accompanied him to Newport, where he remained about six months, until the completion of the gunboats.

He then returned to Norfolk, and was soon after ordered to take command of the navy yard at Gosport. He was thus employed when an event occurred, which, whilst it attracted, in an eminent degree, the attention of the whole country, and materially influenced its history, had an important bearing, both immediate and remote, on the fortunes of Decatur. Early in March, 1807, Decatur received a letter from the British Consul at that place, requiring him to deliver up three deserters from his Britannic Majesty's ship Melampus, who had been enlisted into our naval service at Norfolk, by Lieutenant Sinclair, who was recruiting there for the United States ship Chesapeake; which ship was fitting for the Mediterranean at Washington, under the command of Commander Charles Gordon, to bear the flag of Commodore James Barron.

The recruiting party not being under the orders of Decatur, he refused to interfere. Lieutenant Sinclair declined acting without orders from a superior officer, and the matter being referred by the British Consul to Mr. Erskine, the British Minister at Washington, a renewed demand was made by this gentleman, through the Secretary of State, for the surrender of these deserters. The subject was referred, through the navy department, to Commodore Barron, who, finding on examination, that the three deserters were all Americans, who had been forcibly impressed into the British navy, declined to deliver them up.

As Lord Castlereagh subsequently admitted, in Parliament, that there were in the British navy three thousand three hundred seamen, who claimed to be Americans, one fourth of whom had actually proved their citizenship, nothing was more likely than that all these men were really native born Americans, impressed into the British navy against their will, and probably from under their own flag, and having a perfect right, and indeed duty, to quit the British flag when they could, and enlist again under their own. Nor does the international code, under any circumstances, confer the right to claim, or impose the obligation to give up, deserters from foreign navies or armies. Our late treaty with England, which makes provision for the mutual surrender of fugitives from justice, under certain circumstances, does not provide for the surrender of deserters. To give up to a foreign navy, or army, a deserter, who has entered into yours, is to place him in a worse situation than he occupied before he sought your service and protection.

Some time after this correspondence took place, the Chesapeake left Washington for Norfolk, where she completed her preparations for sea, and sailed for the Mediterranean on the 22d of June. As the Chesapeake weighed anchor from Hampton Roads, a ship, which afterwards proved to be the Leopard, of fifty guns, got under way from among the British squadron, then lying at anchor in Lynhaven Bay, and preceded the Chesa-

peake to sea. As the latter gained an offing, the Leopard shaped her course to close with her, and, when near enough, hailed her, to say that a letter would be sent on board. This proved to be from the Captain of the Leopard, enclosing an order from the vice-admiral, commanding the British forces on the North American station, to search the Chesapeake for certain deserters from the British navy, said to be serving on board of her as part of her crew.

Commodore Barron gave a written refusal to comply with a demand so extraordinary, and the Leopard's boat having, after an absence of more than half an hour, returned, she opened a fire on the Chesapeake, which she continued to keep up for a considerable period, when the Chesapeake, being in a lumbered and unprepared state, and unable to return the fire, and having three of her crew killed and eighteen wounded, struck her colors. She was then boarded by an officer from the Leopard, her crew mustered, and four alleged deserters from the British navy taken from her. Commodore Barron formally surrendered the Chesapeake to the British Captain, who replied, that having, to the utmost of his power, fulfilled the instructions of his commander-in-chief, he had nothing more to desire, and must proceed to join his squadron.

Nothing could exceed the indignation excited throughout the nation by this mortifying occur-

rence. The navy felt it most acutely. Perhaps no individual in the navy was more painfully affected, by this double calamity to his country and to his profession, than Decatur. Having attended the sittings of the court of inquiry, before which the facts attending the rencounter were narrated, he disapproved so entirely of the course pursued by Commodore Barron, that, from motives of delicacy towards that officer, when he was soon after ordered to serve as a member of the court convened for Commodore Barron's trial, he begged the Secretary of the Navy to excuse him from serving, on the ground of his having already formed an unfavorable opinion. The Secretary overruled his objection, and insisted on his serving; but, before taking his seat as a member of the court, Decatur, with characteristic magnanimity, communicated to Commodore Barron's counsel the opinion that he had formed, and his correspondence on the subject with the navy department, that Commodore Barron might exercise his privilege of protesting against Decatur's sitting as a member of his court, on the ground of his having already both formed and expressed an unfavorable opinion. Commodore Barron did not so protest, and Decatur took his seat.

The trial took place. Some of the charges affecting the conduct of Commodore Barron were not proved. The court stated, "However they may think of his activity or judgment, they feel

themselves bound to declare, that he is not guilty under the charge of failing to encourage in his own person his inferior officers and men to fight courageously." They added, "No transposition of the specifications, or any other modification of the charges themselves, would alter the opinion of the court as to the firmness and courage of the accused. The evidence upon this head is clear and satisfactory."

Under the charge of "neglecting, on the probability of an engagement, to clear his ship for action," the following decision was made. "It appears to the court, that Captain James Barron did receive from the commanding officer of the Leopard a communication clearly intimating, that if certain men were not delivered up to him, he should proceed to use force; and that the said James Barron yet neglected to clear his ship for action." Under this charge, therefore, they found him guilty, and sentenced him to be suspended from all command in the navy, without pay or emoluments, for the period of five years, from the 8th of February, 1808.

With regard to the sequel of the British part of the transaction, it may be well here to state, that the four deserters taken from the Chesapeake were carried to Halifax, and tried by a court martial. The deserter from the Halifax was condemned to suffer death, and was actually executed; the three from the Melampus were sentenced to receive five

hundred lashes each, a punishment little short of death. When intelligence of this outrage reached England, her government so far disavowed it as to recall Admiral Berkley, giving him, however, a better command soon after, and to place Captain Humphreys, who probably had no influential friends, for his guilt was inferior, if indeed he was guilty at all, on half-pay. A special minister was sent, to offer atonement for the outrage. But, as he required the repeal of the proclamation, by which the President had, on the occurrence of the outrage, ordered all British ships of war to quit our waters, preparatory to offering such atonement, his mission failed. At a later date, under the influence of an increasing sense of shame, two of the Americans, thus torn from under their country's flag, were returned on board the ship from which they had been taken, and the unworthy outrage thus acknowledged; one had died, and the fourth had been executed.

CHAPTER IX.

Decatur takes Command of the Frigate Chesapeake. — Embargo. — Appointed to the United States. — Cruises on the Coast. — Rencounter of the President and Little Belt. — Decatur presides in the Court of Inquiry. — Remarkable Conversation with Captain Carden. — British Outrages on our Commerce. — Impressment of our Seamen. — Efforts to avoid War ineffectual.

Subsequent to the removal of Commodore Barron from the Chesapeake, Decatur was appointed to command her. The destination of the ship to the Mediterranean was abandoned, and she was stationed, in connection with a force of gunboats, to guard the southern coast. Decatur now hoisted a broad pendant as Commodore, and ever after continued to receive that title. He was but twenty-eight years old when he had won for himself this enviable distinction.

But a painful domestic affliction occurred about this time to cast a shade of gloom over his good fortune. His father, at no advanced age, being but fifty-seven, fuller of honors than of years, paid the debt of nature. He died in November, 1808; and the earth had scarcely closed over his grave, before the faithful companion of his life, feeling that her mission was also accomplished, followed him to the tomb. Decatur honored,

respected, and loved his father as he deserved. He reverenced his mother for her goodness; he loved her for her gentleness and affection. To both he was ever a most dutiful son. Side by side, the venerable pair were laid to rest in St. Peter's churchyard in Philadelphia.

In addition to protecting our coasts from the encroachment of British cruisers, the more painful duty was erelong imposed on Decatur of aiding to enforce the embargo, laid by our own government on our own commerce; a blockade, in fact, of our own coast by ourselves, instituted, for the purpose of inflicting injury on Britain by the suspension of a profitable trade, and of withdrawing our merchant vessels from the spoliations of the belligerents, but of which the immediate and greatest injury recoiled upon ourselves.

The entire suspension of our enormous trade, employing profitably near a million of tons of shipping, and annually conveying to and fro on the ocean property to the value of near two hundred and fifty millions of dollars, and yielding the government a revenue from imposts, capable of sustaining all its current expenses, was adopted in preference to accompanying and protecting that commerce in its lawful transit on the high seas, by an adequate naval force. An annual expense of four millions of dollars would have maintained ten line of battle ships and ten frigates in commission, and this force would have effectually overawed the belligerents, and protected our trade

from molestation. But instead of following and protecting our ships, it was determined to blockade them. The President made no recommendation to build and fit out additional ships of war, as a measure consequent on the attack of the Chesapeake, but suggested the expediency of increasing our movable force on the water by augmenting the number of our gunboats.

Congress responded to the recommendation, by ordering one hundred and eighty-eight to be built, or equipped, so as to carry the whole number to two hundred and fifty-seven, which were estimated to be sufficient, in connection with the stationary batteries, for the defence of our coast.

Decatur zealously acquitted himself of the cautionary and defensive duties in which he was now engaged. The force under his command was kept in the highest state of discipline and preparation. In the Chesapeake he cruised extensively along the coast, visiting various harbors. In the session of Congress in 1808 and 1809, some misgivings began to be felt as to the omnipotence of gunboats, and a law was passed for the equipment of several frigates and other vessels. Among them was the frigate United States, which was assigned to Decatur, as Commodore of the southern station. It was early in 1810, that he hoisted his broad pendant on board this noble old ship, in which he had first sailed as a midshipman, twelve years before, in which he had been launched, and of which he had sixteen years

before selected the keel-pieces as they grew in the forests of New Jersey. Six years before, when but twenty-five years old, he had commanded the Constitution, having condensed, in the short time of his service in the navy, then only of six years' duration, such brilliant exploits as to qualify him, in the opinion of Commodore Preble, and of his country, for that command. Though, therefore, the command of a frigate was no novelty for Decatur, still he must have felt no ordinary sensations of gratification in hoisting his broad pendant on board of a ship, connected in his mind with so many early, yet not distant associations.

Much of Decatur's time at this period was passed in active cruising along our coast for the protection of our trade. Whilst under easy sail, and on soundings, he took advantage of the leisure and opportunities afforded him by his position to prosecute his researches in the natural history of the sea, in which he had for many years taken an interest, as exhibited by the incident of the devil-fish in Tunis Bay. By means of an apparatus, which he contrived for bringing up substances on the bottom, he drew from hitherto unexplored depths a great variety of curious, and in some cases unknown shell-fish. Of these he made a valuable collection, as may be inferred from a letter of Judge Richard Peters, of Philadelphia, from which the following is extracted.

"I should sincerely lament the falling into obliv-

ion the discoveries you have made of these animals, which are not only subjects of zoölogical curiosity, but may furnish highly useful additions to our stock of esculents, as well as afford other beneficial materials for our investigations into the wonderful variety constantly exhibited in the works of the Author of nature. Little is yet known of American geology. On land, explorations are yet in their infancy. The sea has been neglected in everything except the advantages afforded by its surface. Yours is the most important of any attempt I have known to penetrate its secret recesses, and draw from them unheard-of treasures."

Whilst Decatur remained in command of the southern station, with his flag on board the United States, an accidental engagement in the night took place between the United States frigate President and His Britannic Majesty's sloop Little Belt, being brought on by a shot first fired by the British into the American vessel, and which resulted in the Little Belt, though prepared for action, suffering a great deal more than the Chesapeake had done from the unresisted attack of the Leopard. The official statement of the British commander was so contrary to that of Commodore Rodgers, who commanded the President, that it was deemed proper, in justification of the latter, to order a court of inquiry for the investigation of the occurrence. The high character of Decatur pointed him out as a fit person to preside in a court the decision of which would be looked to with interest by both

America and England. Captains Charles Stewart and Isaac Chauncey were his worthy associates in the court, which convened in New York; and on the 13th of September, 1811, after an elaborate examination of most of the officers, and many of the crew of the President, delivered its opinion, substantiating in every particular the report made by Commodore Rodgers of the occurrence in question.

Notwithstanding the disastrous rencounters between the Leopard and Chesapeake, and the President and Little Belt, and the many causes of irritation which existed to produce mutual alienation between the American and British officers, Decatur occasionally exchanged friendly courtesies with the British commanders, whom he met in his cruises along our coasts, when their characters were congenial to his own. Among these was Captain John S. Carden, who, in cruising on our coast, had ever executed the orders of his government in a spirit the least likely to give offence. Instead of going out of his way, as others had done, to add insult to injustice, he had distinguished himself for civility to the American merchant vessels, with which he had occasion to communicate, and on one occasion had been instrumental in saving from perishing the crew of an American vessel, which had been driven off our coast in winter.

A knowledge of these circumstances had commended Captain Carden to the kindly feelings of

Decatur's congenial spirit. In the interchange of civilities, they met at Decatur's table, and the conversation, naturally enough, in the existing relations of the two countries, but strangely having reference to what subsequently occurred, turned on the possibility of war between them, and they two meeting in battle with their ships.

Carden's ship, the Macedonian, was considered the finest, and, at the time, the most formidable frigate in the British navy. Her crew were admirable for their physical qualities, and were in the highest state of discipline. Carden himself was one of the ablest commanders in the service. He felt justly proud of his ship, and was not without confidence in himself. He remarked to Decatur, that the United States was not to be compared to the Macedonian, and particularly pointed out the inefficiency of the twenty-four pounders, on the main deck of the United States; he said, that they could not be handled with ease and rapidity in battle, and that long eighteens would do as much execution, and were as heavy as experience had proved that a frigate ought to carry.* "Besides, Decatur," said Carden, "though your ships may be good enough, and you are a clever set of fellows, what practice have you had in war? There is the rub. We now meet as

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* This was a prevailing opinion at that time in the British navy, in which, in some cases, twenty-four pounders had been exchanged in their frigates for eighteens; an opinion then and even now entertained by some of our own officers.

friends, and God grant we may never meet as enemies; but we are subject to the orders of our governments, and must obey them. Should we meet as enemies, what do you suppose will be the result?" Decatur is said to have replied, "I heartily reciprocate your sentiment, that you and I may never meet except as we now do; but if as enemies, and with equal forces, the conflict will undoubtedly be a severe one, for the flag of my country will never be struck whilst there is a hull for it to wave from." * Little did these two worthy associates think that, by a strange coincidence, the possibilities on which they speculated should indeed be realized, and that on a distant point of the vast ocean they should next meet in deadly conflict.

War between America and England was indeed nearer at hand, than either Decatur or Carden then imagined. Both probably counted with very different feelings on an indefinite exercise, on our part, of that forbearance, which had long since ceased to be a virtue, assuming a character of tame and spiritless submission to accumulated injuries. Sufficient causes for war against England had indeed long existed. She had, in reality, carried on for years an active warfare against us,

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* This conversation is variously reported as to words, though all the accounts are of a similar tenor. The writer has adopted the version, which seemed most suitable to the eminent characters of the two officers. A bet of a hat is said to have been jokingly made on the result.

in the exercise of a pretended belligerent right to annoy France. France had forbidden by her decrees any trade to the British Isles, with which she was at war, under penalty of capture; and though these decrees were rendered inoperative as a blockade, inasmuch as the French cruisers were shut up within their own ports by those of England; yet the latter seized upon the pretext to forbid, under penalty of capture, as if for a violation of blockade, all neutral trade with France, with her allies, and with every country at war with England, or with which she was not at war, if her flag were excluded from its ports; all trade, in short, which she could not carry on herself; with such exceptions only as were suited to offer an outlet for her own commodities; and these exceptions were conceded as evidences of her clemency.

To Americans so unworthy as to minister to her commercial avidity she readily granted licenses to trade with her enemy in contravention of her blockades, and tolerated the infamy of her own vessels sailing as American, by means of papers forged in London, to imitate ours; thus evincing that her object was not so much to cripple her enemy, as to cut us off from the profit of supplying him in order to supply him herself. Every neutral vessel was thus rendered liable to capture, if she did not pay tribute to England. The object of France in her decrees had chiefly been to strike a blow at England, with some

view to the plunder of our extended and unprotected trade; that of England was conceived in a spirit of mingled rapacity and jealousy. The harmless denunciation of the French decrees, so far as the blockade of the British Isles was concerned, became something very different when hurled back by England in her orders in council. France could rob a few of our vessels, which had trusted to the hospitality of her ports; but England, mistress of the ocean, and present with her armed cruisers everywhere, was able to carry on a system of wholesale plunder without example. England, regarding us as her commercial rival, was jealous of the wealth that we were deriving from our neutrality.

By plundering our trade, she enriched herself at our expense, and assisted in manning her fleets with our captured seamen; the rapacity of her naval officers, connected in many instances with the aristocratic classes, who had the monopoly of the British government, was fed from the same fruitful plunder. That these were the unworthy motives that governed her, was made obvious by her continuing her system of plunder after the French decrees were repealed, which she pretended only to have retaliated on us, the unoffending sufferers. Nor was it only on the high seas, that she prosecuted her plunder of our commerce. Under pretence of more effectually blockading France, and her allies and dependencies, she maintained squadrons of her cruisers on our

own coasts and within our own waters, molesting our ships in the entrances of our ports, her captains claiming to have dominion within the moorings marked by their buoys, when anchored near our towns, for the enjoyment of their hospitality, and murdering one of our citizens, in an attempt to exercise the right of search on a coaster within one of our harbors.

But the worst feature of her tyranny over us grew out of her pretension to claim the services of British seamen wherever she might find them. A municipal law of England conferred on her navy the power of impressing British seamen in her ports, or on board her merchant ships, when the King's service made it expedient. This municipal law of England her officers extended to neutral vessels in her own ports, or on the high seas, under the safeguard of the national law established for the equal good of all. England boldly laid claim to the dominion of the seas, and the right to impose the laws by which that dominion should be exercised; the right was claimed as a consequence of her power.

By virtue of this real power and pretended right, she everywhere waylaid our unprotected merchant vessels, and, where no pretext existed for confiscating either vessel or cargo, tore our seamen away, under pretence of their being Englishmen, from under the protection of their own banner, to serve under that of their oppressor. An article of captured property, however unjustifiable

the law under which it was seized, could only be condemned after a solemn trial before a duly constituted tribunal; but the person of an American citizen could be dragged from under the flag of his country by any British commander, the sole judge, without appeal, in a case where he had a direct interest to have a full crew and an efficient ship, and himself delegating the authority to examine and decide the question of nationality to a subaltern, probably even less scrupulous than himself.

More than six thousand of our seamen were known to our government to have been thus taken from what should have been the safeguard of our flag; and double that number, known and unknown, were believed to have been thus torn from their country and friends. As a climax to this injury, the Chesapeake was attacked, three of her crew were killed and eighteen wounded, in order to drag back into bondage four Americans, who had obeyed a natural and honorable instinct in quitting an involuntary servitude, to place themselves, where they had a right to think they would be at length safe, on board an American man-of-war; and one of these Americans, thus a second time kidnapped, suffered a felon's death.

As if these incentives to our slumbering resentment had not been sufficient, England had, even whilst engaged in a delusive negotiation for the settlement of existing difficulties, employed an agent to interfere in our domestic dissensions, ex-

cite sedition among the disaffected, and bring about a dissolution of our Union; whilst, on our remote borders, the savages were instigated to fall upon the scattered settlers, who were extending the dominion of civilization and Christianity, with the laws, language, and race of England, and to desolate our frontier with their peculiar warfare.

War, however, was only at last resorted to, when all other efforts to restore England to a tardy sense of justice had failed. An embargo, proclaimed towards the close of 1807, with the view of withdrawing our commerce from the depredations of the belligerents, was continued in force until 1809, when it was repealed and succeeded by an act of non-importation from England, which England still contrived to evade by an extensive system of smuggling, by means of which her manufactures were introduced, our laws nullified, and the government defrauded of its duties. These various efforts to restore England to a sense of what was due to the just claims of an independent nation having failed of success, the determination was slowly and deliberately forced upon us to appeal to the last resort of war, in order to redress injuries the most wanton and insulting, which had been long and steadily persisted in, and rescue, even at the last hour, from annihilation, what we had left of the attributes of an independent nation.

When at length, towards the commencement of 1812, it appeared that war was inevitable, and ex-

tensive preparations were made for carrying it on by land, with an army thirty thousand strong, Congress could not be induced to add anything to our naval force, beyond the equipment of the few ships we possessed. A clause in the bill for naval appropriations, providing for the construction of ten new frigates, was struck out. What advantage might have been gained, and what brilliant trophies won, by these additional ships, we may now judge from a knowledge of what was accomplished by the few which we possessed. An equally wise proposition, made by an enlightened member of Congress, in view of impending war, to establish an embargo for ninety days, in order "to retain the sinews of our strength," was in like manner voted down. The collective wisdom of the country could maintain an embargo of nearly two years' duration, ten times more oppressive on ourselves than on those against whom it was directed, whilst war was remote, but it could not impose one for three months when the object was to save our commerce from capture after war had become inevitable.

CHAPTER X.

War declared against England. — Our Naval Force. — Decatur joins Rodgers's Squadron at New York. — They put to Sea. — Chase of the Belvidera. — Arrival at Boston. — Sail again. — Decatur encounters the Macedonian. — Capture of Macedonian. — Arrival at New London. — Complimentary Resolutions of Congress and State Legislatures. — Presentation of Swords to Decatur. — His Reception in New York.

During the winter of 1811 and 1812, Decatur remained on his station as commander of the squadron for the protection of the southern coasts, and the entrance to the Chesapeake Bay. He had his flag still on board the frigate United States, with the frigate Congress, sloop Wasp, and brig Nautilus, under his orders.

On the 18th of June, Congress, after reciting, in powerful language, the wrongs and indignities which we had received from England, passed an act declaring war against her, which, on the following day, was made public by the President's proclamation. We had at this time only five frigates, three sloops, three brigs, and four schoon-

ers, in commission, and five frigates, two of which were unseaworthy, and four bomb vessels, in ordinary. The gunboats, one hundred and seventy in number, as they were never of any use, it is almost

superfluous to notice. The failure to put in commission the five frigates in ordinary, and still more the refusal to build the ten additional frigates when preparations were made for war upon land, make it almost certain that no intention was entertained of employing our navy except defensively, leaving it to the army alone to act offensively on the Canada frontier, where, indeed, England was very assailable.

It is stated, on the authority of Commodore Bainbridge, in his Life, and more recently reaffirmed by Commodore Stewart, that it had been decided by our government at Washington, on the eve of the declaration of war, that our few ships should not be risked on the ocean in a contest with the overpowering navy of England, numbering nearly one thousand sail, with an aggregate tonnage of near a million, and having more than five hundred sail in commission, of which more than eighty were in our neighborhood, on the North American and West India stations. At this conjuncture, Captain William Bainbridge and Captain Charles Stewart, being in Washington, and learning the determination that had been formed, wrote a joint letter to the Secretary of the Navy, stating strongly the unfavorable effect which such a course would have on the navy itself, and the feeling of the country towards it. They urged that our vessels, by sailing singly, would inflict great injury on the commerce of the enemy, and in the event of any

conflict on equal terms, they were persuaded that the high state of discipline and efficiency of our ships would secure an honorable result. Even if some were lost, it would be better than for them to be ingloriously idle, whilst the army was actively engaged against the enemies of our country.

This letter is said to have done much to change the opinion of the government, which the unhappy rencounter of the Chesapeake had impressed with a formidable idea of the British navy, and an humble one of our own. Previously to this judicious advice being thus given by the two distinguished Captains above named, Decatur had been ordered, in anticipation of the declaration of war, to leave his station in the Chesapeake, and join Commodore Rodgers at New York, where he accordingly arrived on the 21st of June, with the frigates United States and Congress, and the brig Argus. On the same day, Commodore Rodgers received from the Secretary of the Navy the official proclamation of war.. The letter from the Secretary, accompanying it, did not, it is said, convey an order to quit our own coast, where the presence of the squadron was desired to protect our arriving commerce, or to cruise extensively on the ocean in search of the enemy's ships of war. Commodore Rodgers, aware of the misgivings that had been entertained with regard to the capacity of our ships to keep the sea in defiance of the fleets of England, is said to have sailed on his

own responsibility, in the hope of overtaking the Jamaica fleet, one hour after he had received the declaration of war, and by five o'clock in the afternoon, had crossed the bar of Sandy Hook, with his own ship, the President, and the sloop Hornet, in addition to the squadron of Decatur.

Commodore Rodgers had received intelligence of the Jamaica fleet, consisting of one hundred and ten sail of West Indiamen, valued at twelve millions sterling, having sailed a month before for England, under convoy of several men-of-war. He immediately went in pursuit of this valuable fleet, the destruction of which would have inflicted a severe blow on our enemy. He received intelligence, the following night, from an American vessel, of the British fleet being at no great distance, and crowded sail in pursuit. He would undoubtedly have been successful, had he not fallen in, on the morning of the 23d, with a British frigate, known afterwards to be the Belvidera. The course was altered in chase of her. The President got near enough to exchange shots from the bow and stern chasers of the two vessels; but by lightening the Belvidera, she eventually escaped, having led the squadron far out of its course.

The pursuit of the Jamaica fleet was resumed, and new intelligence was obtained of their having been seen off the Banks of Newfoundland, to the eastward of which quantities of cocoa-nut shells and orange peels were seen, indicating that

the squadron was in the right track. But it was frequently diverted from its course in chase, and nothing was seen of the fleet on the 18th of July, when, being near the entrance of the British Channel, the chase was abandoned, and the course shaped for Madeira. After having made that island, the squadron stood back for the Azores, and thence to the Banks of Newfoundland, and into the harbor of Boston, where it arrived on the last day of August, after a very active cruise of seventy-two days, having captured six British, and recaptured one American, merchant vessel.

Had the ships cruised separately, the results would, no doubt, have been more favorable. The Belvidera would have engaged the President, had she fallen in with her singly, and the result of the action between the Guerriere and Constitution, which latter ship arrived in Boston, victorious over her adversary, a few hours only before Commodore Rodgers's squadron, was auspicious of what would probably have been the fortune of any one of the frigates that had met an enemy. Never were ships in a higher condition of efficiency, or officers and crews animated with a loftier spirit of enterprise and patriotism, than this squadron of Commodore Rodgers, who had most effectively exerted himself to raise the discipline and character of our little navy. As it was, the squadron, by keeping the greater part of the British force on the American station together in

search of it, prevented the capture of many valuable ships which reached our ports in safety.

On the 8th of October, Commodore Rodgers again put to sea with the President, United States, Congress, and Argus. When four days out, the United States and Argus parted company; and soon after the United States and Argus separated, and each was left alone to follow her fortunes. The United States stood away to the southward and eastward, and nothing of note occurred until the 25th of October, when, being in latitude twenty-nine degrees north, and longitude twenty-nine degrees west, near the Island of Madeira, a large sail was discovered, standing to the northwest, under a press of sail. A fresh breeze was blowing from the southward, and the ships were soon near enough to make out the stranger to be an enemy's frigate; and she afterwards proved to be the Macedonian, rated thirty-eight, and mounting forty-nine guns, and admitted to be, at the time, the finest frigate in the British navy. She had recently been put in complete order at Plymouth, and, whilst in dock, had excited the general admiration of naval men.

When intelligence of the capture of the Guerriere arrived in England, the Macedonian, then already at sea, was spoken of as the one British frigate of a force to cope with the American forty-fours; and the confidence of a successful result of any encounter she might have with them was much increased by the high character of Captain

Carden, reputed one of the bravest and most skilful officers in the British navy. The United States was of greater length than the Macedonian, but she was inferior in her breadth of beam. She mounted fifty-four guns, and those of her main deck were of heavier calibre than those of the Macedonian. But we have seen that Captain Carden considered eighteens more efficient guns than twenty-fours, and believed his own ship, on that account, more formidable than the United States.

As the two ships approached each other, the Macedonian took in her studding-sails, and hauled by the wind on the larboard tack. The United States cleared ship for action; and, being by the wind on the starboard tack, when the Macedonian bore a-beam, the United States went about, laying her head to the southward and westward, with her larboard tacks on board, like the Macedonian, which now bore forward of her larboard beam, and dead to windward, being, at eight o'clock, about two miles off, which distance, as she greatly outsailed the United States, it was only in her power to diminish. Both ships now hoisted their colors, and, the Macedonian edging gradually away to close, it was evident that the action would soon commence.

The unremitting efforts of Decatur to have an efficient ship had been admirably seconded by his first lieutenant, William H. Allen, who had been constantly with him during the last five years since he took command of the Chesapeake. They

were now to test the value of their mutual toils. Never, indeed, did a ship go into action in a higher state of preparation, nor a crew under the animating example of their heroic commander, and the inspiration of his past achievements, in a loftier spirit of courage and patriotism. The sailors had a right to be in earnest in the approaching struggle, and to give their best efforts to their country. The war was in a great measure their own; it had been undertaken for the maintenance of "free trade and sailors' rights."

An incident which occurred to a lad of ten years, on board the United States, just before the action commenced, may serve to exhibit the spirit with which the whole crew was animated. This boy, named Jack Creamer, who had been allowed to make the cruise, though his age prevented him from being recruited as one of the crew, now accosted Decatur, and, touching his hat, said to him, "Commodore, will you please to have my name put down on the muster roll?" "Why, my lad?" he replied, with mingled curiosity and interest at the courage and confidence beyond his years with which the boy seemed animated. "So that I can draw my share of the prize money, Sir." The necessary order was given, and Jack returned to the gun of which he was powder boy.

Soon after nine o'clock, the action commenced by a distant cannonade from the long guns of both frigates, there being a heavy swell, which disturbed the accuracy of firing. This was carried on

with little injury on either side for half an hour, when, the Macedonian's mizzen topmast and gaft being shot away, she bore up for closer action. As she drew nearer, the fire of the United States became very destructive. Then was seen the full effect of the admirable training of her crew at the guns. The rapidity with which the fire was kept up from the United States made her appear one mass of flames and smoke from stem to stern, and led the crew of the Macedonian to believe her actually on fire, which they announced by three hearty cheers. But the wreck and slaughter around them soon changed their exultation into woe. Soon her mizzen mast was seen to go by the board. "Ay, ay, Jack," cried the captain of a gun to his comrade near Decatur, "we have made a brig of her." "Take good aim, my lad, at the main mast," said Decatur, "and she will soon be a sloop." Turning to another captain of a gun, he said, "Aim at the yellow streak; her spars and rigging are going fast enough; she must have a little more hulling."

Soon, indeed, her fore and main topmasts went over the side, and her bowsprit, fore and main mast, and fore yard, all badly crippled, alone remained standing. At this conjuncture, one of the sailors, working at a gun, saw a favorite comrade fall desperately wounded at his side, and exclaimed to him, "Ah, my poor fellow, I must attend to the enemy a few minutes longer; then I will look out for you; his colors must soon come down."

"Let me live," he exclaimed, "till I hear that, and I shall want care from nobody." The prophetic hope of this humble but heroic American was soon realized. In seventeen minutes after the vessels were in close action, the Macedonian, after making an ineffectual effort to run on board the United States, in the vain hope of retrieving the day by boarding, struck her colors, a complete wreck.

She had received near one hundred shots in her hull, several of which were between wind and water. Every thing about her was cut to pieces, and only one of her boats, a life boat, which she towed astern, could swim. Out of her crew of three hundred souls, one hundred and four were killed or wounded; of these, thirty-six were killed and sixty-eight wounded, of which only fifteen recovered, making an aggregate of eighty-nine deaths; a destruction almost without example, and rendered the more extraordinary by the small number killed and wounded on board the United States, amounting only to twelve, of which five were killed, and two subsequently died of their wounds. This enormous disparity can in no measure be accounted for by the disparity in the size and force of the vessels. A large allowance must be made for the superior skill and gunnery of the United States, the credit of which should redound to Decatur and his officers; and much was doubtless due to the loftier spirit and ardor of American sailors, fighting voluntarily for "sailors'

rights," against men held in bondage, whose success would have only riveted their own chains.*

Among the killed of the Macedonian were two Americans, John Wallis and James Card. Another American, William Thompson, had been previously drowned in boarding an American merchantman at sea. Five other Americans had been obliged to serve at the guns of the Macedonian during the action.

The United States was ready for another action in half an hour; but the scene presented by the Macedonian is represented by one of the

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* . . . . . "English seamen fight
For England's gain and glory; it is right;
But will that public spirit be so strong,
Filled, as it must be, with their private wrong?"

Impressment is now abolished in the British navy. A formidable fleet is maintained in active service by voluntary enlistment. A milder system of discipline is the necessary result. Every effort is made to render the service popular. The seamen have chiefly been created in the navy, and belong to it almost as much as the officers. They are all natives. This, with other efforts, steadily and systematically pursued, to improve the efficiency of their ships, induced by doubts of their invincibility, suggested by the events of the last war, make them more formidable than they have ever been, and call loudly for corresponding efforts from those who may hereafter contend with them. Self-distrust is by no means a necessary concomitant of respect for an enemy, whilst the contrary feeling sometimes betrays those, who entertain it, to their ruin. This was the error of the British in our last war; one which they will not fall into again; and we, made wise by their example, should be careful not to change places with them.

officers, who was sent on board of her, as truly distressing to humanity; a painful commentary on the ravages of war, whose worst horrors on this occasion had fallen on those who had provoked it. "Fragments of the dead were distributed in every direction, the decks covered with blood, one continued agonizing yell of the unhappy wounded; a scene so horrible of my fellow-creatures, I assure you, deprived me very much of the pleasure of victory."

The boarding boat, which returned from the Macedonian, brought back her captured commander. As Decatur advanced to receive him, they mutually recognized in each other the parties to that prophetic interview, which had taken place a few months before in our own waters. The prisoner was the same Captain Carden, whom Decatur had last received, as a friendly guest, on board the United States. As Captain Carden extended his sword to the victor's acceptance, Decatur, with the generous courtesy which was his distinguishing characteristic, declined the offer in these words; "Sir, I cannot receive the sword of a man, who has so bravely defended his ship;" words inadequate, indeed, as all words must have been, to remove the mortification of the vanquished, yet well suited to soothe his anguish, immeasurably increased by his belief that his was the first British frigate that had surrendered to an American.

How unlikely he and all other British officers

considered such a result, may be estimated from the fact of Captain Dacres of the Guerriere having endorsed the following note on the register of a licensed American vessel, three days before his capture by the Constitution. "Captain Dacres, commander of his Britannic Majesty's frigate Guerriere, presents his compliments to Commodore Rodgers, of the United States frigate President, and will be very happy to meet him, or any other American frigate of equal force to the President, off Sandy Hook, for the purpose of having a few minutes' *tête-à-tête*." The London Times pathetically lamented over the gloom, which the capture of the Guerriere "cast over high and honorable minds. It is not merely that an English frigate has been taken, after what we are free to confess may be called a brave resistance; but that it has been taken by a new enemy, an enemy unaccustomed to such triumphs, and likely to be rendered insolent and confident by them. Never before did an English frigate strike to an American." When accident made the capture of the Guerriere known to Captain Carden, or delicacy permitted it to be communicated to him in conversation, it no doubt tended to relieve his wounded pride, and sense of responsibility to his profession and country, though with some sacrifice of his patriotism.*

* In relation to this new discomfiture, Mr. Canning subsequently remarked in Parliament, that "he felt it would be altogether unjust to blame the skill of the officers and men

Soon after the action had terminated, Decatur sent for Jack Creamer, the lad who had asked, on going to quarters, to have his name entered on the muster roll, and thus accosted him; "Well, Jack, we have taken her, and your share of the prize, if we get her safe in, may be two hundred dollars; what will you do with it?" "I will send half of it to my mother, Sir, and the other half shall pay for my schooling." "That is noble," exclaimed Decatur. The affectionate spirit towards his parent, and the ambition for his own improvement, evinced in this reply, effectually interested Decatur in his behalf. He subsequently obtained for him a midshipman's warrant, and made him a sharer of his after achievements. Creamer ever proved himself most worthy of his benefactor; became an excellent seaman and officer, and, compensating by indefatigable industry for the want of early advantages, was fast adding all the science and polite culture that could grace his station, when the life, which had been spared during three

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in our service, engaged in the action to which he alluded; yet he was bound to declare, that he was not one of those who said, that we ought not to think of the capture of the Guerriere and Macedonian. His decided opinion was, that it could not be thought too deeply of. It was a subject which in every sense was calculated to rouse the patriotism and excite the sensibilities of the country. The spirit of our seamen had been unconquerable, and any diminution of the popular opinion with respect to that glorious and triumphant spirit, was, to his mind, a dreadful and alarming consideration."

engagements under Decatur, was lost by the accidental upsetting of a boat on an excursion of pleasure in a remote sea.

On taking possession of the Macedonian, Decatur ordered Lieutenant Allen carefully to prevent any interference with the private property of the officers and crew. Towards Captain Carden he set an example of liberality, in relieving him of such parts of his effects as had become useless and burdensome to him after the loss of his ship, including stores, wine, and the music and musical instruments belonging to an uncommonly fine French band, which had been previously captured in the Macedonian or some other French frigate. This band now gladly changed their allegiance to a flag, under which they could once more play their own national airs.*

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* Decatur paid Captain Carden eight hundred dollars, the estimated value of the property he did not wish to retain. The wardroom officers of the United States pursued the same liberal course towards those of the Macedonian.

But Decatur manifested a higher and better generosity, the impulse of a refined mind, in the deep yet delicate sympathy which he took in the feelings of his prisoner. This is best expressed in his private letter to Mrs. Decatur, written a few days after the action. "One half of the satisfaction," he says, "arising from this victory is destroyed in seeing the mortification of poor Carden, who deserved success as much as we did, who had the good fortune to obtain it. I do all I can to console him." How successful were Decatur's efforts in a task, in which it was necessary neither to do too little nor too much, may be seen from the following extract from the parting letter of Captain Carden; "I have much gratitude to

The business of refitting the Macedonian with jurymasts, and making the necessary repairs to enable her to reach an American port, was soon accomplished by the indefatigable exertions of Lieutenant Allen. That of conducting her through the fleets of British cruisers, that covered the ocean and blockaded our own coasts, was one of much greater difficulty, requiring all the sagacity and watchfulness of the commander and his worthy lieutenant. Every thing proved auspicious, and the United States arrived in safety at New London on the 4th of December. The ships had separated off Montauk Point, and the Macedonian put into Newport, but soon after joined her consort in New London, where their arrival awakened the liveliest patriotic enthusiasm and pride. The municipal authorities immediately tendered to Decatur a solemn expression of their thanks, and the citizens united in a brilliant entertainment to him and to his officers.

Decatur had sent off his official account of the action immediately after his arrival at New London. It was brief, simple, modest, and well expressed; characteristics which distinguished all his similar communications, and which, in this case, drew from the enemy the following reluctant compliment. "While we see British superiority

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express to you, my dear Sir, for all your kindnesses, and all my officers feel it equally with myself. If ever we should turn the tables, we will endeavor, if possible, to improve on your unusual goodness."

upon the ocean thus disputed, and the victory of the Americans thus described, we know not which most to admire, the heroism of Decatur in capturing the Macedonian, or his modesty in describing the battle."

Lieutenant Hamilton, son of the Secretary of the Navy, was the bearer of Decatur's report, and of the captured colors of the Macedonian. With these he arrived in Washington on the evening of the 8th of December, on which a ball had been given to the officers of the navy, and particularly to Captain Charles Stewart, of the Constellation, in acknowledgment of civilities recently offered by him to the citizens of Washington. The occasion was also graced by the presence of Hull, the gallant victor of the Guerriere, by many of the public functionaries, and by those who were most distinguished in the society of the capital. The Secretary of the Navy being present, Lieutenant Hamilton proceeded thither with his despatches. He was received with acclamations into the festive hall, and, having acquitted himself of his errand, was welcomed to the embraces of his father, mother, and sisters, all by a happy accident present to exult in the safety and success of one, endeared by the noblest qualities to all who knew him; a feeling which they would have cherished the more deeply, could they have foreseen, that, when he should again accompany Decatur to battle, it would be to return no more.

The ball-room had been decorated with the

trophies of recent naval victories. A desire was expressed that the colors of the Macedonian should be added to those of the Constitution and Alert. They were accordingly borne in by Captains Stewart and Hull, and presented to Mrs. Madison, the lady of the President, amidst the inspiring strains of music; acclamations of patriotic exultation broke from the lips of the fair and the brave. Enthusiasm was at its height, when, at the supper table, the following toast was proposed and drunk with all the honors; "The health of Commodore Decatur and the officers and crew of the United States." Even now no patriotic American can recur to these recollections without a throb at the heart, a sudden glow of unutterable emotion. How must they have affected those who contemplated them as present events, such as the conception previously entertained of our own weakness and British power had not permitted them to hope?

The President, in transmitting Decatur's official report to Congress, took occasion to say; "Too much praise cannot be bestowed on that officer, and his companions on board, for the consummate skill and conspicuous valor by which this trophy has been added to the naval arms of the United States." The report of Captain Jacob Jones, of his capture of the Frolic, an action unsurpassed by any of the war, was at the same time transmitted to Congress, and the President, speaking of both achievements together, further

remarked, in reference to the impressment of our seamen; "A nation, feeling what it owes to itself and its citizens, could never abandon to arbitrary violence, on the ocean, a class of men which gives such examples of capacity and courage in defending their rights on that element."

On the receipt of this message, Congress resolved, "That the President of the United States be requested to present to Captain Hull of the frigate Constitution, Captain Decatur of the frigate United States, and Captain Jones of the sloop-of-war Wasp, each a gold medal, with suitable emblems and devices, and a silver medal, with like emblems and devices, to each commissioned officer of the aforesaid vessels, in testimony of the high sense entertained by Congress of the gallantry, good conduct, and services of the captains, officers, and crews of the aforesaid vessels in their respective conflicts with the British frigates the Guerriere, and the Macedonian, and sloop-of-war Frolic; thereby entwining the American brow with a triple wreath of victory, and exhibiting examples highly honorable to our national character, and instructive to the rising navy." As a further practical commentary on the effect of these victories, and compliment to the victors who had achieved them, Congress now authorized the immediate construction of four ships of the line, and six frigates like the Constitution and United States.

The state legislatures of New York and Mas-

sachusetts passed resolutions in the highest degree complimentary to Decatur, and his officers and crew, for the capture of the Macedonian. The legislatures of Pennsylvania and Virginia each presented him with a sword. Philadelphia, which knew and valued him personally, also presented him with a sword; on which was engraved the Spartan exclamation of the elder Decatur, "Our children are the property of their country;" and a new township in Mifflin county, in Pennsylvania, honored itself and complimented him by assuming the name of Decatur. The city of New York, whence Decatur had sailed, and where he was now hourly expected to arrive with the United States and Macedonian, prepared for him a triumphant welcome. It was resolved that the freedom of the city should be presented to him in a gold box, and his portrait procured, to adorn the walls of the city gallery; and that the thanks of the Common Council should be presented to his brave companions in arms, the officers and crew of the United States.

The intricate navigation of Hell Gate, and the necessity of combining favorable circumstances of wind and tide, detained Decatur several weeks with the United States and Macedonian, before he was able to pass this narrow and winding strait. The city authorities, impatient of this delay, and anxious to greet and honor the defender of his country, persuaded Decatur to leave his ship at her anchorage in Long Island Sound, and repair

to New York on Tuesday the 29th of December, to receive the freedom of the city and attend a sumptuous public entertainment given by the corporation, and the citizens generally, to the three naval victors, Decatur, Hull, and Jones, the last of whom, being detained at Washington by the customary court of inquiry into the capture of the Wasp, which vessel, with her prize, had been taken by a British line of battle ship, immediately after the action, had not been able to reach the city in time to be present.

This festival, which nearly five hundred persons took part in, and which twice that number would gladly have attended had the space allowed, took place in the large assembly room of the City Hotel, which was colonnaded with representations of the masts of ships, decorated with flags entwined with laurel. Each of the inferior tables had in its centre a miniature frigate bearing the American flag; the principal table, at which De Witt Clinton, the mayor, presided, having Commodore Decatur on his right hand, and Captain Hull on his left, had its central area occupied by a sheet of water with grassy banks, and a frigate floating on it at her moorings. Behind this table hung a ship's sail, having on it the representation of an eagle, holding in his beak a scroll, inscribed with the memorable sentiment, "Our children are the property of their country!"

After the removal of the cloth, and drinking to our country, to the President, and to the Gov-

ernor of the state, the following toast was proposed; "Our navy! With such an auspicious dawn, what may we not hope will be its meridian splendor!" When this sentiment was announced, the sail behind the President was brailed up, disclosing an illuminated transparent painting, representing the Constitution taking the Guerriere, the United States taking the Macedonian, and the Wasp taking the Frolic. This exhibition, presenting a spirited and striking imbodiment of the scenes uppermost in the thoughts of all present, excited a tumult of enthusiasm, and caused the whole company to rise instinctively and cheer.

Soon after, the following sentiment being given, "American gallantry! Patriotism its stimulus, glory its object, a nation's gratitude its reward," a sail, suspended behind the Vice-President, was in like manner brailed up, exhibiting an American eagle holding three medallions, on which were respectively inscribed "Hull and the Guerriere," "Decatur and the Macedonian," "Jones and the Frolic." Among the volunteer toasts was the following, in allusion to the instantaneous effect of the three naval victories, in honor of which the festival was held, in leading to an extension of the navy; "The three naval architects, Hull, who at one stroke laid the keels of ten hulls, Jones, who raised the frames, Decatur, who gave the finishing stroke." Decatur made this modest reply to these high compliments of himself and his companions; "The citizens of New York!

May their great liberality stimulate us to acts more proportioned to their approbation." Nor were the gallant dead, who had paid with their life's blood the price of these achievements, forgotten, on this occasion of patriotic exultation. The following just and touching tribute was all that could now be offered to their self-devotion; "The memory of those brave tars, who have nobly fallen in acquiring glory for the American navy!"

The living tars of the United States received more substantial evidences of the gratitude and admiration of their countrymen. The corporation of New York probably took more pleasure in feasting these brave fellows, than they had ever done in feasting themselves. The same brilliant saloon, which they had decorated for the reception of Hull, Jones, and Decatur, was preserved in the same condition for the sailors of the United States; and on Thursday, the 7th of January, they were landed from their boats, and advanced in procession through the principal streets to the City Hotel. The fine band, which had been captured in the Macedonian, led the way, playing inspiring airs. The seamen came next, dressed in blue jackets and trousers, red waistcoats, and glazed hats, decked with pendent streamers of ribbon; and the marines in uniform brought up the rear. They were everywhere received with cordial and enthusiastic greetings, and followed by crowds of urchins, emulous of

one day imitating the heroism which excited their admiration.

The sailors were received into the banqueting room with an appropriate address, which paid a just tribute to their valor, patriotism, and fidelity, and welcomed them to the hospitality of New York; to which the boatswain, as leader of the crew, briefly and pertinently replied on behalf of his shipmates, who made what he had said their own, by their unanimous cheers in honor of their entertainers.

At the conclusion of the repast, Decatur entered the room, accompanied by Lieutenant Allen. The burst of joy, which his presence called forth, was but a just measure of the love and devotion with which he reigned within their hearts; of a homage won by the unceasing kindness and solicitude, with which he had watched over their welfare and protected them; and of the mingled gallantry and skill, with which he had conducted them to glory. Taking part in their festivity, he reminded them, by the sentiment which he proposed, that the war had been undertaken for their defence, and gave them, as the highest motive for gratitude to their country and renewed exertion in her behalf, "Free trade, and no impressments." At the close of the entertainment, he communicated to them an invitation from the managers of the theatre, who had set apart the entire pit for their accommodation, to attend the performances of that evening, and,

in conclusion, addressed to them the following brief words of advice, which became a pledge of their good behavior. "Sailors, your orderly and decorous conduct this day gives me high satisfaction. Continue it through this evening; and convince the hospitable and patriotic citizens of New York, that you can maintain the same order in the midst of amusements, as you have done when sailing upon the ocean and conquering the enemy." Three more enthusiastic cheers from the crew greeted the departure of their hearts' chieftain, Decatur.

This gallant crew of the United States were as generous as they had shown themselves brave. John Archibald, one of the carpenter's gang, who had been killed in the action with the Macedonian, left by his death three orphan children unprovided for. When their destitute condition became known to the crew, they immediately made up a sum of near one thousand dollars for their maintenance and education, and, through the ready instrumentality of Decatur, invested it in a secure manner to carry out their benevolent intentions.

CHAPTER XI.

Macedonian and Hornet added to Decatur's Command. — Takes his Squadron into Long Island Sound. — Squadron blockaded in New London. — Expectation of Attack. — Proposals for a Match between the United States and Endymion, and between the Macedonian and Statira. — Disappointment. — Decatur obtains the Discharge of an impressed Seaman.

The Macedonian was with great propriety retained under the orders of Decatur. Had opportunity to get to sea been afforded him, he would probably have erelong surrounded himself by a fleet, won by his own prowess from the enemy. Though even then it is questionable, whether the gratitude of his country would have sufficed to confer on him a title suitable to such a command, that of admiral. The immediate command of the Macedonian, under Decatur's orders, was worthily bestowed on Captain Jacob Jones, who, a few days before the capture of the Macedonian by Decatur, had signalized himself in the Wasp, of eighteen guns, by the capture of the British sloop Frolic, of twenty-two guns, after a fight of three quarters of an hour, at close quarters and in heavy weather, terminated by boarding; an engagement unsurpassed by any on record for courage and hardy seamanship.

If the skill, courage, and successful achievement of Captain Jones made him a worthy associate for Decatur, they were no less fitted, whilst they coöperated harmoniously for their country's good, to be drawn by the cords of affection towards each other by a community of sentiments and character. In early manhood they had commenced their career together, on board the United States, under Commodore Barry, during the maritime war with France. The friendship thus early formed had been increased during the Tripolitan war, when the captivity of Captain Jones, as one of the lieutenants of the frigate Philadelphia, had owed its termination in part to the everywhere conspicuous valor of Decatur. And now, decked with fresh laurels, they met again, at the call of their country, to act together for her good, in defence of her dearest rights. Never were two men better suited by nature to appreciate and love each other. Both were characterized by the same high and chivalrous tone of sentiment, by the same calm amenity of demeanor, the same gentleness and benevolence of spirit, ever impelling both to succor and protect those, who were placed under their command. They were rather the fathers and friends, than the masters, of their crews. A magnanimous generosity of temper placed them as far before ordinary beings in courtesy, true kindness, and gentleness, as they had surpassed them in lustre of achievement.

A third vessel was added to Decatur's squadron; the Hornet, commanded by James Biddle. This officer had shared Captain Jones's captivity, as one of the officers of the Philadelphia. Serving as a volunteer with Captain Jones on board the Wasp, he had distinguished himself in the action with the Frolic. To an upright character he added an indomitable spirit and commanding intellect. Courage, character, resources of every sort considered, the three commanders formed a rare association. The three ships being thoroughly equipped, and admirably officered and manned, offered the fairest promise, if once at sea, and clear of the overwhelming force of blockaders that hovered around our harbors, of adding fresh honor to the American name.

It is highly illustrative of the superior character of our gunnery, that, whilst the United States and Hornet, having each recently encountered and overcome, respectively, an English frigate and sloop, required very trifling repairs, and were quickly ready for sea, the Macedonian had been so wrecked by the United States, as to make very extensive repairs necessary. The frigate United States having a tendency to become hogged, or depressed at the bow and stern, with reference to the central parts of the ship, Commodore Decatur made that an excuse for reducing her number of guns, from fifty-four to forty-eight, by removing those at the extremities, being in this arrangement also influenced by the

chivalrous motive of reducing his force to a more perfect equality with that of the enemy's frigates, so as to deprive them of any excuse of inferiority, should he again encounter and capture one of their largest frigates.

Early in May, the squadron, being ready to sail, assembled in the anchorage off Staten Island, for the greater convenience of getting to sea, should the blockading squadron be diminished in number, or intermit its vigilance. But two of the enemy's line of battle ships and three frigates remained perpetually off the bar, and Decatur, who ardently longed to enter on the field of enterprise with his present formidable force, was at length compelled to abandon all hope of getting to sea by the way of Sandy Hook. The more extended entrance of Long Island Sound, through which Decatur had safely passed with his prize, seemed to afford a better prospect of eluding the blockade. In that direction Commodore Decatur sailed with his squadron in the night of the 24th of May, and, by the skill of his pilots, safely passed his vessels through the intricate and dangerous strait of Hell Gate.

When in the Sound, an accident happened to the flagship, which might have been fatal to all on board of her. While proceeding up the Sound, she was struck with lightning. It shattered the main royal mast, bringing down the broad pendant. Passing down the conductor, the fluid was attracted by a gun into one of the

main deck ports, whence it passed into the ward-room hatch, and, skirting the magazine scuttle, entered the surgeon's room, put out his light, tore up his bed, and, descending between the side and ceiling, went out at the water's edge, tearing away a portion of her copper.

The danger of the ship was for a moment imminent. The officer of the deck on board the Macedonian, which was less than half a cable's length astern, observing the falling of the broad pendant simultaneously with the flash of lightning, knew that the United States was struck, and, apprehending that she might explode, immediately threw all aback on board the Macedonian, to increase her distance from the danger. But the accident was unattended by further disaster, and the squadron pursued its course, regardless of what, in other ages of the world, would have been considered an omen of such evil import as to justify the suspension of an enterprise.

Unfavorable winds, and the intricacy of the navigation for heavy ships, so far delayed the progress of the squadron, that it was only on the 29th of May, that it was able to reach the neighborhood of Montauk Point, which forms the eastern extremity of Long Island, and the entrance of the Sound. The open ocean was before them, rich with the promise of adventure. But a formidable squadron of the enemy's line of battle ships and frigates was lying in wait, to cut them off from the pursuit for which all were so eager.

Nothing remained for them but to yield to the overpowering necessity, and bear up to seek shelter in the harbor of New London.

Decatur, having perceived that neither on the evening of the last of May, nor on the following morning, was there more than one of the enemy's line of battle ships in sight, conceived that she intended to offer him battle on terms which might well be conceived advantageous to the enemy; certainly so, if we estimate the chances of success by the subsequent result of the battle between the Constitution, under the skilful and gallant Stewart, and the British ships Cyane and Levant. He got his squadron under way on the morning of the 1st of June, and stood boldly out to engage the line of battle ship, afterwards known to be the Ramilies, Sir Thomas M. Hardy. When nearly within gun shot, and fully prepared for an arduous engagement, an additional line of battle ship, the Valiant, and Acasta and Orpheus frigates, suddenly hove in sight from behind Montauk Point, steering a course to cut them off from the mouth of the harbor.

Decatur immediately tacked his squadron, and stood back towards the harbor; his own ship, which had led while standing out, now bringing up the rear and being nearest to the enemy. The chase was continued to the entrance of the harbor, Decatur exchanging several shots, from his stern chasers, with the Acasta, which was the nearest of the enemy's ships. The squadron re-

gained its anchorage without injury, and Decatur immediately made preparations to resist an attack, which the enemy's manœuvres seemed to indicate an intention to make. One of the enemy's ships was said to have two mortars mounted. The squadron was moored between Forts Trumbull and Griswold, with springs on their cables, ready to present their broadsides in the line of the channel.

He subsequently moved his ships to a more defensible position, five miles above New London; and as it had been given out, somewhat boastfully, by the British, that they intended, at any rate, to have the Macedonian back, "even if they followed her into a cornfield," Decatur made every preparation, both with his ships and by means of a fort, which he erected in a commanding position on Dragon Hill, to give them a warm reception. The forts below were also garrisoned by two companies of United States troops, and placed in an efficient state; and the Governor of Connecticut was in attendance for the defence of New London, with his guards and other uniformed and well-disciplined companies of militia. These formidable preparations, and the well known character of Decatur and his two subordinate commanders, left the enemy no expectation of meeting with anything but a sanguinary and unsuccessful issue to any attack which they might make; and whatever projects they may have entertained were soon wisely abandoned.

Observing that the enemy had given up all intention of attacking him at his moorings, on the 4th of October, Decatur abandoned the fort, which he had erected on Dragon Hill, and dropped his squadron down within two miles of New London, and subsequently anchored off the town, for the greater facility of receiving early intelligence of Commodore Hardy's movements, and seizing the first favorable opportunity of getting to sea. The vigilance, however, of Sir Thomas Hardy, a worthy antagonist of Decatur, and so favorably known as the favorite captain of Nelson, in whose arms the hero passed his last moments on board the Victory at Trafalgar, was steady and unabated, and Decatur was compelled to relinquish the hope of reaching with his squadron that field of adventure, where he had promised himself new and enlarged opportunities of service to his country, and renown for himself and his associates.

Whilst in this state of inaction, Mr. Robert Fulton, who had recently solved with success the problem of propelling a vessel through the water by the agency of steam, visited New London for the purpose of obtaining the high sanction of Decatur's opinion, as to the advantages of a steam vessel of war, whose model he submitted to Decatur. Decatur at once appreciated the great value of the invention, and saw how useful such a vessel would be, if already completed, in compelling the squadron, by which he was blockaded,

to withdraw from the coast, so as to enable him to get to sea. Together with his intelligent associates, Captain Jones and Commander Biddle, he united in a letter of approbation of the plan and model of Mr. Fulton, and very clearly pointed out the important part, which steam has since assumed in all naval operations. The vessel was subsequently authorized and constructed by the government, in conformity with Mr. Fulton's plan, but not in season to be available in extricating Decatur from the state of hopeless durance in which he pined.

How eager he was to sail, and how unnecessarily sensitive he was to public opinion, lest it should suspect him of any want of desire to get out, may be conceived from the fact, that, throughout nearly the whole of this dreary detention, he voluntarily deprived himself of the valued society of Mrs. Decatur, so well suited to soothe his impatient anxiety, and beguile the tedium of delay, by her intelligence and resources; alleging, as a sufficient excuse for the deprivation to himself and to her, "that, as there were more persons in the world disposed to find fault than to approve, it might be said, if he had his family with him, that he did not make every effort to get to sea." So sensitive to his honor, and so self-sacrificing, when his own inclinations might even seem to be in conflict with what he owed to his country, was the nature of Decatur. This trait was eminently characteristic of the man in every stage of his career.

Decatur remained with his squadron in the harbor of New London, in the same state of hopeless inactivity, until the close of 1813. Whilst the Valiant line-of-battle ship, Acasta frigate, and sloops Loup Cervier, (the old Wasp) and Borer, remained in sight at the entrance of the harbor, the Ramilies, also of the line, with the Orpheus frigate, were cruising between Point Judith and Block Island, with the double purpose of looking out for Commodore Rodgers, whom they expected to make for Newport in the President, and of intercepting Decatur, should he succeed in passing the first line of blockaders.

At this period, the Endymion frigate, of the largest class, mounting fifty guns, and being the heaviest in the British navy, having become part of the blockading force, a remark was made by Captain Hope, who commanded her, in the cabin of the Ramilies, and in the presence of Commodore Hardy, and of an American gentleman, Mr. Moran, who had recently been made prisoner, intimating a desire for a meeting between the Endymion and the United States. Captain Stackpole, of the Statira, also expressed a wish to meet the Macedonian, which was a sister ship to his own, and of equal size and armament. In the course of the conversation, Commodore Hardy seemed not unwilling to accede to the proposition, especially so far as regarded the Statira and Macedonian, but would not consent to the challenge coming from the British side.

The purport of this conversation being soon after reported to Decatur, he immediately wrote to Commodore Hardy, stating the forces of the United States and Macedonian, the former mounting forty-eight guns, and the latter forty-seven, and proposing a meeting between them and the Endymion and Statira, the former of which mounted fifty guns, and the latter forty-eight. Decatur's proposition was founded entirely on the supposed correctness of Mr. Moran's statement, and was intended to obviate the only practical difficulty in the way, that, from whom the formal invitation was to proceed. His letter was expressed in the most courteous and modest terms, and terminated with the following chivalrous disavowal, on behalf of himself and Captain Jones, of any personal hostility to the officers with whom they expected to contend in deadly conflict. "We beg you will assure Captains Hope and Stackpole, that no personal feeling towards them induces me to make this communication; they are solicitous to add to the renown of their country; we honor their motives."

Commander James Biddle was despatched with this letter, and with authority from Decatur to consent that the two British frigates should be allowed to strengthen their crews with volunteers from the other vessels of the British squadron. Nothing could be more illustrative of Decatur's chivalrous temper, than the voluntary offer of so important a concession. Sir Thomas Hardy

acknowledged to Commander Biddle the great liberality of Commodore Decatur's proposals, and expressed a willingness to leave the decision of the proposition to the captains of the Endymion and Statira, though he considered he was incurring a very great responsibility. He promised, after considering the subject with the captains, to return an answer the following day.

During the absence of Commander Biddle, the officers and crews of the United States and Macedonian, being fully persuaded that they were soon to meet the enemy, were animated by the highest spirit of enterprise and expectation. They were mustered on the quarter-decks, and addressed by their respective commanders. Both speeches had the merit of being sententious and brief. Decatur's was as follows; "Officers and seamen, you will shortly be called upon again to try your skill and valor. This ship and his Britannic Majesty's ship Endymion, of equal force, will speedily try their strength. You are accustomed to victory, and you will not tarnish the glory you have already won. I have no fear for the result." Captain Jones's was equally to the purpose; "My lads, the Macedonian was once conquered by American tars, and she will soon have an opportunity to gain a victory herself. You have not forgotten the sloop of war Frolic, and you will shortly be introduced to the frigate Statira. My lads, our cruise will be short, and I trust a very profitable one." Three rousing cheers from the

crews gave a heart-stirring response to these animating addresses.

But the patriotic excitement and hopes for distinction, which reigned on board the two ships, were doomed to disappointment. On the following day, a letter was received from Sir Thomas Hardy, expressing his readiness to allow a meeting between the Statira and Macedonian, but declining to allow the Endymion to meet the United States, from his belief that she was not equal to her in force, on account of the United States having forty-two pounder carronades on her spar deck, whilst the Endymion had thirty-twos. The Endymion mounted two more guns than the United States, which brought her weight of shot thrown at a broadside within forty-two pounds of that of her proposed antagonist; and Decatur offered to Captain Coote, of the Borer, who brought Sir Thomas's reply, to efface this difference by disarming until the equality of force between the two ships should be perfect.

The meeting of the four ships was, however, definitively declined by the British Commodore, from an unwillingness, doubtless, to incur the responsibility, which would have devolved on him, in the event of the capture of the British ships. The letter of Commodore Hardy was expressed in terms of perfect courtesy and good taste; qualities which did not characterize a letter, which Captain Stackpole thought proper to address to Decatur, and which came enclosed in that of

Commodore Hardy. In renewing, on his own part, the offer to meet the Macedonian with the Statira, Captain Stackpole took occasion to say; "The honor of my King, the defence of my country, engaged in a just and unprovoked war, and the glory of the British flag, is all I have in view."

Notwithstanding the anxiety of Captain Jones to be allowed to accept this new proposition, and engage the Statira with the Macedonian, Commodore Decatur declined to accept it on the ground, that the Statira would thus be enabled to avail herself alone of the privilege he had granted to two ships, and to select her crew from the whole British squadron. In order to have rendered the Macedonian in any degree equal to the Statira in this respect, Decatur would have been obliged to break up the crews of the United States and Hornet; and it would thus have been impossible to comply with his orders to proceed to sea.

Though Decatur did not reply directly to Captain Stackpole, he took occasion, in writing to Commodore Hardy, to administer to Stackpole the following keen yet courteous reproof for his gratuitous remarks about the justice of the war; "Whether the war we are engaged in be just, or unprovoked on the part of Great Britain, as Captain Stackpole has been pleased to suggest, is considered by us as a question exclusively with the civilians, and I am perfectly ready to admit both

my incompetence and unwillingness to confront Captain Stackpole in its discussion."

The favorable impression made by Decatur on Sir Thomas Hardy, in the course of this correspondence, and the very different feelings he entertained towards his present enemies from those, with which he recently carried on the war in concert with Nelson against the so called natural enemies of England, are manifest throughout his several letters, the last of which closes with the expression of the following humane and liberal sentiment; "I beg to assure you, Sir, that I shall hail with pleasure the amicable adjustment of the difference between the two nations." *

Soon after the termination of this correspondence, which indefinitely postponed Decatur's tem-

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* The following note of Decatur to John Bullus, Esq., then navy agent at New York, is a good specimen of his brevity, his prudence, and his humane gallantry towards the gentler sex.

"DEAR BULLUS,

"There is a fight making up between this ship and the Macedonian, against the Endymion and Statira. Sir Thomas assures us he will let us know to-morrow, when I shall inform you all about it. In the mean time, this expected affair having become known, I am fearful that it will find its way into the public prints. May I ask you, my good fellow, to wait on all the editors with whom you may have influence, and request them to withhold publishing until the affair is settled? Their doing so will be humane. It may perhaps prevent several bright eyes from being dimmed.

"Yours sincerely,

"S. DECATUR."

porarily cherished hope for escape from inactivity and a new opportunity of distinction, a circumstance occurred which tended to augment the disadvantageous impression made upon Decatur by Captain Stackpole's bearing, as manifested in his letter to Decatur. On the 14th of March, John Thayer, a respectable farmer in Massachusetts, applied to Decatur for a flag of truce to proceed to the enemy's squadron, in order to prove the identity and ask the discharge of his son, Hiram Thayer, who had been impressed into the British navy eleven years before, and who, during the last six years, had been on board the Statira, where his skilful seamanship and good conduct had raised him to be boatswain's mate.

Since the breaking out of the war with the United States, Thayer had represented to Captain Stackpole that, being an American, he would not fight against his country. When the Guerriere went into action with the Constitution, the gallant Dacres, whose soul revolted from the parricidal idea of a man's lifting his hand against his country, magnanimously gave permission to seven American seamen, who formed part of his crew, to retire from their quarters. It better suited Captain Stackpole's ethics to give the following answer to Thayer's remonstrance against being compelled to lift his hand against his country; "If we fall in with an American man-of-war, and you do not do your duty, you shall be tied to the mast, to be shot at like a dog."

Decatur readily entered into the feelings of the father, who sought the liberation of his child, and furnished him with a letter to Captain Capel, who now commanded the blockading force before New London. The result is best and most briefly told in the words of Decatur in reporting the circumstance to the Secretary of the Navy, and they are valuable for the glimpse they give us into the workings of his own feelings. "The son descried his father at a distance in the boat, and told the first lieutenant of the Statira that it was his father; and I understand the feelings manifested by the old man, on receiving the hand of his son, proved, beyond all other evidence, the property he had in him. There was not a doubt left on the mind of a single British officer of Hiram Thayer's being an American citizen, and yet he is detained, not as a prisoner of war, but compelled, under the most cruel threats, to serve the enemies of his country." Captain Capel did not feel authorized to discharge Thayer without recurring to the superior authority of his admiral, but promised to forward Decatur's application, and expressed the confident belief that an order would be returned for Thayer's discharge; which in fact occurred soon after, and the old man recovered possession of his son, greatly to the gratification of Decatur, by whose earnest interposition it had been brought about.

CHAPTER XII.

Decatur takes Command of the President. — Expeditions to the Chesapeake and Mississippi. — Decatur puts to Sea. — Discovers a British Squadron. — Overtaken by the Endymion. — Engages her and attempts to board. — Endymion sheers off. — Dismantled and silenced. — President overtaken by the Pomone and Tenedos, and surrenders. — Arrives at Bermuda. — Courteous Reception of Decatur. — He is sent Home in a Frigate. — His Reception.

The command of the frigate President having become vacant, in the spring of 1814, by the transfer of Commodore Rodgers to the Guerriere, then expected to be shortly ready for sea, the President was offered to Commodore Decatur. She was a faster ship than the United States, and Decatur gladly accepted her, in the belief that she would be more likely to elude the blockaders. The United States and Macedonian were removed up the Thames, above New London, in April of 1814, and dismantled. Decatur was detained some time on board the United States, to preside over a court-martial for the trial of a number of the officers of the Chesapeake, which had recently been captured by the Shannon. These duties being accomplished, he removed to the President, then at New York, accompanied

by all his officers and crew, who were happy in being still allowed to share his fortunes, as he was to have their continued association and support.

Captain Jones, with the officers and crew of the Macedonian, were removed to Lake Ontario, and Commander Biddle, in the Hornet, after remaining some time to guard the dismantled frigates, received orders to join Commodore Decatur at New York. By great skill, he succeeded in passing the blockaders, and reached New York in safety.

By the time the President was prepared for sea, the impression became general that the enemy, who had prepared a formidable expedition of sea and land forces to act against our coast, meditated an attack upon New York, this rumor having probably been set in motion by the British agents, to withdraw the public attention from their contemplated expeditions against the Chesapeake Bay and the Mississippi. The greatest efforts were made by the government to put all the approaches to New York in a state of defence, in which it was much aided by the zeal and exertions of the citizens. As the readiest means of giving spirit and confidence to these exertions, and to secure the enemy a warm reception, Commodore Decatur's projected cruise was for the present abandoned, and he was ordered to remain in New York, to take the entire command of the naval defences of every kind within the harbor.

The force under his orders, including seamen of the navy in the ships and gunboats, and sea-fencibles, a species of naval militia, enrolled for the special defence of the harbor, amounted to more than five thousand. He was unremitting in his efforts to render this force formidable, and succeeded in inspiring every one, ashore and afloat, with the happiest assurance of success in the event of an attack. To the training of the crew of the President, destined to act as his own body-guard, he gave special attention. He armed them with pikes, pistols, and cutlasses, and manœuvred them in person, to preserve a perfect line whilst charging with running speed, to be accompanied, when in contact with the enemy, with a terrific cheer. The startling novelty of this new method of attack, and the reckless courage of these brave sailors, led by Decatur, and animated by his own spirit, must have rendered this land boarding formidable.

In due time, the real object of the British armaments having become manifest by the attacks on Washington, Baltimore, and New Orleans, Decatur was left at liberty to prosecute his intended cruise, whenever he could succeed in getting to sea. His squadron now consisted of the President, which bore his flag, mounting fifty-two guns, thirty long twenty-fours on the main deck, and forty-two pounder carronades on the spar deck; the new sloop Peacock, of twenty guns, Commander Lewis Warrington; Hornet, of twenty

guns, Commander James Biddle; the brigantine Tom Bowline, carrying stores for the squadron, commanded by Lieutenant B. V. Hoffman; and the fast-sailing armed merchant brig Macedonian, also laden with stores. The destination of the squadron was the East Indies, where it was believed that an injury might be inflicted on the valuable British trade in those seas, commensurate with that which Captain Porter, in the Essex, had accomplished among the British whale fisheries of the Pacific Ocean.

Early in January of 1815, the squadron was ready for sea, with the exception of the store brig Tom Bowline, which had recently been purchased from the merchant service. The mouth of the port of New York was still vigilantly blockaded by a superior force of British cruisers. Believing that his chance of escape into that open field of adventure, where he longed to try his fortune with the noble ship which he now commanded, would be greatly increased by his sailing alone, he gave orders to Commander Warrington to sail, so soon as the Tom Bowline was ready, and the circumstances favorable, with the remaining vessels of the squadron, and stand for the Island of Tristan da Cunha, which he had assigned as his first place of rendezvous.

A strong gale having come on to blow off shore, on the 14th of January, Commodore Decatur thought that the blockaders would be temporarily driven by it from their station, and that the

moment would be favorable for getting an offing unperceived. He accordingly weighed from his anchorage off Staten Island, on the evening of that day, and stood down the bay, accompanied by the store brig Macedonian. The ship passed Sandy Hook with a fresh westerly breeze, and rapid headway, and approached the bar about eight o'clock, when, the pilots having mistaken the channel, owing to the boats stationed as beacons to mark it having been improperly placed, the ship struck the ground, and, being very heavily laden for a long cruise, continued to thump violently for nearly two hours, so as to become much hogged, or broken-backed, and otherwise strained, breaking several of her rudder braces, displacing a portion of her false keel, and otherwise receiving, as it was apprehended, considerable injury.

It was highly expedient, after this disaster, that the President should return immediately into port for repairs; but the wind, which blew strongly out of the harbor, rendered this act of prudence impossible. It only remained to endeavor to force her over the bar before the tide should fall. By great exertions, this object was effected at ten o'clock, and the course was shaped close along the Long Island shore, in the expectation of passing inside of the blockaders. After running fifty miles in this direction, the course was altered to southeast by east, in the reasonable belief that the blockaders, having held on as closely as the gale would allow to the land,

would now be some distance to the westward. If the British had struggled effectively to keep their station as nearly as possible off the port, this belief would have proved well founded, and Decatur would have reached the open ocean unopposed.

But good luck came to their assistance. They had drifted to the very point where Decatur thought they ought not to be; and with the early dawn, at five o'clock in the morning, three ships were descried right ahead, not more than two miles off, and standing east-north-east on a wind. But for the unhappy delay of two hours on the bar, the President would have been at least twenty miles outside of them.

Decatur immediately ordered the helm of the President put to starboard, and hauled her by the wind on the larboard tack, with her head to the northward, towards the east end of Long Island. By daylight, four ships were discovered in chase under a press of sail; one on each quarter, and two astern. The leading ship of the enemy was the Majestic, a razee. Soon after eleven o'clock, she was near enough to open a fire on the President, but without effect, and which was not returned. The Majestic dropped gradually astern; but the next ship, which was the Endymion, a frigate of the heaviest class, considered by her captain a match for the United States, and therefore for the President, evidently had the advantage of the President in sailing, and was gradually gaining on her.

It was an unaccustomed and unexpected sight for the President, however heavily laden, to be overtaken by any ship. It could only be accounted for by the serious injuries she had received, whilst thumping heavily for two hours on the bar. Towards noon, the wind became light and baffling. The sails of the President were kept wet from the royals down; the water was started into the hold, and pumped out to lighten the ship, anchors and boats cut away, cables cut up and thrown overboard, together with spare spars, provisions, and all that could be most readily got at to lighten the ship, with the exception of whatever related to the battery and fighting department.

At three o'clock, the enemy, having been joined by a brig in addition to his previous force, was coming up rapidly, bringing up a brisk breeze from the northwest, whilst the President still had only a light air from the same quarter. The British could not complain of ill luck on this occasion. Before the President could feel the breeze, it had brought the Endymion within gunshot, when she commenced a fire from her bow guns, which the President returned from her stern-chasers. Both ships were now steering east by north, with the wind on the larboard quarter. By five o'clock, the Endymion had obtained a position on the starboard quarter of the President, within a quarter of a mile, in which neither the stern nor quarter guns of the President could be brought to

bear upon her, whilst she kept up a very destructive fire from her larboard bow and bridle ports upon the President, directed chiefly at her spars, sails, and rigging, on some part of which every shot from the Endymion now took effect.

Painfully feeling the inequality of this action, and seeing his brave followers falling around him unavenged, with a victory easily bought by the enemy as an inevitable result of a prolongation of the action on terms so disadvantageous, the heroic idea occurred to Decatur of attempting to retrieve the day by boarding the Endymion, and making her superior sailing, which had occasioned her to overtake the President, instrumental in preserving him from capture. He called his commissioned officers together, and told them that their only remaining chance for victory was to lay the Endymion on board, carry her, and escape with her after scuttling the President. The officers gladly embraced the heroic project. He ordered a howitzer to be pointed down the main hatch to scuttle the ship, and the crew sent aft to receive his orders, and thus addressed them: "My lads, that ship is coming up with us. As our ship won't sail, we'll go on board of theirs, every man and boy of us, and carry her into New York. All I ask of you is, to follow me. This is a favorite ship of the country. If we allow her to be taken we shall be deserted by our wives and sweethearts. What, let such a ship as this go for nothing! 'T would break the heart of every pretty girl in New York!" The whole

crew responded to this appeal by three hearty, unanimous cheers, proclaiming how entirely the spirit and purpose of the commander had infused themselves into the bosoms of his followers, raising each of them to his own exaltation of patriotic daring.

Everything being prepared to accomplish this heroic project, Decatur now only waited until the Endymion should close upon his starboard beam, sufficiently near for him to sheer suddenly on board of her, before his intention could be perceived and frustrated. But whether the cheers on board the President, by revealing Decatur's intention, had put the captain of the Endymion on his guard, or that he preferred his present to a broadside position, he continued to preserve it, neutralizing his superior sailing, which would quickly have brought him alongside of the President, by yawing, and occasionally firing a broadside.

Finding it impossible to get the Endymion in a position to enable the President to sheer on board of her, and that the President was now receiving the fire of the Endymion without the ability to return it, being unwilling to haul up to the northward in shore, so as to bring his stern-chase guns to bear, as it would have exposed him to the raking broadside of the Endymion, Decatur determined, as an only resource, to bear away from his present course of east by north to south, thus bringing the wind on the starboard quarter, and the Endymion on the starboard beam. This evolution he per-

formed at six o'clock, and set all his starboard steering-sails, so as to preserve, as much as possible, his distance from the rest of the pursuing squadron. He hoped to be able to beat the Endymion out of action before the other ships could get up, and, if favored with a dark night, still possibly to escape into the open ocean. The chances of getting into Long Island Sound, or running the ship on shore, were of course abandoned.

The Endymion bore away, also steering the same course as the President, and the two ships ran broadside and broadside, within effective musket shot, keeping up, for two hours, a heavy and most destructive fire from their great guns and musketry. The interest of this engagement was much enhanced by the ships being so equally matched. The President mounted fifty-two guns, the Endymion fifty. Both had thirty long twenty-four pounders on the main deck. On the spar deck the President had forty-two pounder carronades, whilst the Endymion had thirty-twos. The Endymion had been equipped and sent to the North American station to meet our heaviest frigates. Her captain had been anxiously desirous for an encounter with the United States, for which he considered his ship a match; and he had been especially sent off New York to cruise for the President, being reinforced for the purpose, with two officers and fifty prime seamen, who had volunteered from the Saturn.

At the first broadside of the Endymion, Deca-

tur was deprived of the valuable aid of his skilful and efficient first lieutenant, Mr. F. H. Babbit. This gallant young officer was standing near the wheel, when a thirty-two pound shot struck him below the right knee, severing the leg entirely. Deprived of its support, he fell down the wardroom hatch to the main deck, fracturing the thigh of his wounded limb in two places. He survived nearly two hours, calmly dictating his last messages of affection to his friends, removed from his neck the miniature of the young lady to whom he was betrothed, with a request that it might be delivered to his mother, and in like manner sent his watch, as a parting memorial, to his brother.

Soon after, Decatur, whilst standing on a shot box to observe the enemy, received a wound in the chest, from a large splinter, which prostrated him on the deck. For some moments he lay stunned. The anxious seamen gathered round to his assistance. But, as he recovered his consciousness and strength, he ordered them to their posts, and rising unaided, quietly resumed his station. He was subsequently struck by a smaller splinter in the forehead, which occasioned an effusion of blood on his face. Heedless, however, of his wounds, he gave his whole attention to the watchful management of his ship, and the annoyance of the enemy. Never, indeed, was a battery better served than that of the President during this engagement. Nor was her marine guard,

fifty-six in number, under command of Lieutenant Twiggs, behind the sailors in precision and rapidity of firing. Decatur describes their fire as "incomparable." In the course of the engagement, they discharged no fewer than five thousand cartridges.

When the action had continued more than an hour, intelligence was brought to Decatur of the death of Mr. A. Hamilton, the fourth lieutenant. This was a young officer of great merit, equally distinguished by beauty of person and the rarest excellences of character, and whose cheerful, happy temperament endeared him to all who knew him. Alike the pride of the ball-room and of the quarter-deck, he carried everywhere the same sunny and joyous demeanor. "Carry on, boys! carry on!" was the favorite exclamation with which, in festive scenes, he was wont to excite his companions to mirth, and in scenes of danger to exertion. He was in the act of uttering this animating exclamation to the people of his division, to whom it was familiar, and who loved him no less for his cheerfulness than his other good qualities, when, a grape shot traversing his breast, voice and life were extinguished together. To no heart had he been drawn nearer by his good qualities than to that of Decatur. By his side in the capture of the Macedonian, Decatur had delegated to him the proud office of carrying to the Secretary of the Navy, Hamilton's own father, the official report of the action and the

captured colors of the enemy. To that father he was to return no more. Of a cherished and worthy son nothing remained but the consoling memory, that he had nobly died in the service of his country.

After this destructive conflict had continued two hours, the fire of the Endymion began sensibly to slacken. Intervals of more than a minute passed without her returning a single shot. At half past eight, when the broadside action had continued two hours and a half, the Endymion, with her sails literally cut from the yards, and most of her larboard guns dismounted or otherwise disabled, was rapidly dropping dismantled out of the action. At this moment, the junior lieutenant, Mr. E. F. Howell, who commanded the fifth division of guns on the quarter-deck of the President, looking over the quarter at the Endymion, remarked to the midshipman of his division, Mr. Emmet, who was standing beside him, "Well, we have whipped that ship, at any rate!" At this moment he saw a flash from her bow, and added, "No, there she is again!" Mr. Emmet turned to reply, and saw Howell fallen at his feet. A grape shot from this gun, the last that the Endymion fired, had struck him in the head. Thus fell this accomplished young officer, but eighteen years old, who was approaching manhood with the brightest prospects of usefulness and distinction.*

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* Midshipman Richard Dale, son of the distinguished Commodore of that name, who was second in command with Paul

The Endymion being thus beaten out of action, Decatur wore ship with the President, and resumed his former course of east by north, under a press of sail from royal studding-sails down. So little regardful was Decatur of the Endymion, that the President's stern was now offered to her broadside. But the Endymion was so completely silenced, that

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Jones on board the Bon Homme Richard when she took the Serapis, had been wounded earlier in the action, by a shot which shattered his leg. The limb was amputated, and Decatur entertained, and expressed in his official report, a strong hope of his recovery. But the hardships, to which he was exposed in the gales which succeeded the battle, occasioned his death. He was a youth of the fairest promise, scarcely sixteen years of age.

To the friends of Babbit, Hamilton, Howell, and Dale, whose united ages averaged less than twenty, the following consoling reflections may be applied no less fitly than to those of the individual whose heroic death they commemorate, Lord Robert Manners, who fell at the age of twenty-four, having already served his country in eleven general engagements at sea.

"To such these thoughts will lasting comfort give;
Life is not measured by the time we live;
'T is not an even course of threescore years,
A life of narrow views and paltry fears,
Gray hairs and wrinkles, and the cares they bring,
That take from death the terrors or the sting;
But 't is the generous spirit, mounting high
Above the world, that native of the sky;
The noble spirit, that, in dangers brave,
Calmly looks on, or looks beyond the grave.
Such Manners was; so he resigned his breath,
If in a glorious, then a timely death."

Another Manners died as gloriously on board the Reindeer, when that vessel was captured by the gallant Blakely in the

she did not fire another shot at the President, though she remained in a position, and within a distance, to be raked by her for half an hour.

Although the fastest of the pursuing ships had thus been silenced and left disabled behind, she had so far cut the sails and otherwise crippled the President, as to render the rest of the pursuing vessels also superior to her in speed. Still Decatur hoped, that, at this inclement season, bad weather or darkness of the night might enable him to baffle pursuit. It was now past nine o'clock, and it did in fact cloud up, so as to conceal the President from the British squadron. The third lieutenant, Mr. Gallagher, an officer of great coolness and judgment, expressed the opinion, that they would now escape. This was the general sentiment of the officers, which Decatur also shared. But his lucky star was not in the ascendant. At eleven o'clock, the clouds blew over, leaving a bright starlight, through which the headmost of the pursuing squadron were revealed. Having hit upon the same course with the President, they were now arrived within gunshot.

A frigate, which proved to be the Pomone, ranged up on the larboard side of the President, delivering her broadside, which killed and wounded a num-

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Wasp. Already suffering from several severe wounds, which scarcely left him the power of motion, he refused to be taken below, but clambered into the rigging, at the head of the remnant of his crew, to attempt carrying the Wasp by boarding, when, receiving two balls in the head, he fell back brandishing his sword.

ber of men on board the President, and then took her station on the larboard bow of the President, to prevent her escape. The Tenedos, at the same moment, occupied a raking position on the President's starboard quarter; and the Majestic, accompanied by the brig Dispatch, was closing up under her stern.

All hope of successful resistance or escape was now over. Decatur's whole duty to his country had been done. There only now remained a painful but sacred one due to the faithful followers, who still survived from the wreck and carnage of this unequal conflict. In obedience to this duty, he had now to pronounce the unaccustomed acknowledgment, that he surrendered. The crew were ordered below, out of reach of the enemy's fire. Decatur remained at his station. Even after this was done, the Pomone, not hearing the hail, poured into her a murderous broadside. "She means to sink us!" cried Decatur; "to your quarters, my lads, and renew your fire!" But ere this could be effected, the Pomone, discovering that a light hoisted at the President's peak had been hauled down, discontinued her fire; and further needless effusion of brave blood, which had already been so freely poured forth, ceased at half past eleven o'clock.

The killed of the President amounted to twenty-five, numbering among them three out of five of her lieutenants, and her wounded to sixty. The killed of the Endymion amounted,

by the report of her officers, to eleven, and her wounded to fourteen;* a disparity partly owing to the President having been engaged with and suffered from other ships besides the Endymion, and partly to the circumstance of the President's fire being directed to disable the spars and sails of the Endymion, with a view to getting away from her, and with perfect success, whilst the fire of the Endymion was aimed at the hull of the President.

The Pomone and Tenedos now took possession of the President, and commenced the removal of the prisoners, with the exception of the wounded. Having delivered up the command of the President to the British lieutenant, who came to take charge of her, Decatur descended to the cockpit to seek relief from the pain of wounds, of which he had now leisure to be conscious.

To estimate his present condition, bodily and mental, we must bear in mind, that, near thirty hours before, he had got his ship under way from Staten Island, on an intensely cold winter's evening, to go to sea. But the confident hope of getting out safely and unobserved had been a cheering excitement to him. To this succeeded the revulsion occasioned by the stately and careering

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* Commodore Decatur states that ten were buried from the Endymion after he got on board of her, thirty-six hours after the action.

ship being arrested, in her course, by striking on the bar, and thumping for hours with sufficient violence, as it seemed, to dash her to pieces. There is nothing so disheartening to the seaman, as to feel his ship stranded beneath his feet, and no longer obedient to his will. But exertions were to be made, a calm exterior preserved, to prevent discouragement among the crew. And when the strained and twisted ship was again afloat, he had to tread her deck, for their sake, with a step as assured as if all had been well.

The season of sleep had arrived, but the enemy must be watched for with vigilance intense and unceasing. The guns were kept ready for action; no hammocks were down that night on board the President; and though the safety of all was concerned that the faculties of the chief should be refreshed by genial sleep, the chief could not devolve upon another either his own responsibility or the restless vigilance which it imposed; nor could he sleep whilst his subordinates were wakeful. Then followed the discovery of the enemy's squadron, when a place of safety might be supposed to have been reached; the attempt to escape, and the exertions of every sort, which it rendered necessary; the preparations to resist to the uttermost an overwhelming force; the prolonged conflict that ensued; the painful spectacle of gallant comrades falling ineffectually around him, and no success at the end to compensate all this exertion of mind and body, but, instead

of it, the scene closing with a crowning disaster, from which nothing but honor was saved.

We must carry our thoughts back through this long vista of rapidly succeeding events, in order to conceive the feelings with which Decatur, weary, wounded, and a prisoner, sought the cock-pit of the President. In this scene of carnage and mortal agony, many a languid eye was turned with interest on the entering form of their adored commander, and their own sorrows were forgotten in sympathy for his. The surgeon pressed forward to greet him, and inquire as to his safety. "When you have attended to these brave fellows, Doctor," he quietly remarked, "I would thank you to look at my chest; it is very painful, and I believe I have been hurt." On exposing his chest, it was found quite purple with the blood drawn to the surface by the violence of the blow he had received. Whilst the surgeon was making the proper application to this part, and dressing the wound on his forehead, he inquired into the condition of his suffering comrades around them, and addressed to them words of sympathy and consolation. It was the voice which they had often heard in tones of exultation, animating them with his own ardor; always associated with protection and kindness, and, though now faintly breathing from the wounded prisoner, as powerful to awaken the heartfelt affection of his followers, as when sounding in cheering tones from the victor on the

quarter-deck, as he thanked and congratulated the companions of his glory.

There was yet one effort to be made, one painful duty to be performed, ere Decatur could seek the rest which he so much needed. He had surrendered his ship to a squadron. To its senior officer alone could he deliver up his sword in token of submission. The Endymion had joined company at two o'clock in the morning, having bent new sails, rove new running rigging, and shifted her spars, since the President had beaten her out of the action; at three the Majestic came up, when Decatur, putting on his full uniform, repaired on board of her, and delivered up his sword to Captain John Hayes, who commanded the squadron. In the spirit of a brave and generous enemy, he immediately restored it, with the courteous remark, that "he felt proud in returning the sword of an officer, who had defended his ship so nobly."

Having performed this painful duty, Decatur returned to the President, and sought, during a few hours, such repose as his sufferings, bodily and mental, would allow. In the morning, the melancholy task devolved upon him of performing the last sad offices to his deceased shipmates and friends, Lieutenants Babbit, Hamilton, and Howell. The three bodies, shrouded in their country's flag, were placed side by side in the gangway. The surviving officers, dressed in uniform, gathered round all that was left of messmates who had won their respect by their high

and valuable qualities, and become endeared to them closely as brothers by so much that was amiable. Decatur, standing on the gun-slide next to the gangway, read the burial service with a solemnity and pathos significant of his own emotions, and thrilling to all who heard him. Their bodies were committed to the deep, honored with appropriate volleys from British marines, forming part of the prize crew.

Decatur now wrote a hasty letter to Mrs. Decatur, briefly describing the occurrences which had terminated in his capture, and assuring her of his safety and health. It was put on board the Majestic, and subsequently, by the courtesy of Captain Hayes and Admiral Hotham, forwarded, without loss of time, to its destination, that it might not be anticipated by published accounts of the disastrous termination of the President's cruise.

Captain Hayes, having determined to send the Endymion and Pomone to Bermuda in convoy of the prize, assigned the Endymion as the ship in which Decatur was to take passage. It continued nearly calm during the day succeeding the capture. The British squadron diligently employed the interval in refitting the crippled ships, and in removing the prisoners from the President to the Endymion and Pomone. Decatur was not removed until towards evening. The weather had now become threatening, and it began to blow violently before he reached the Endymion, so that the boat in which he embarked was near foundering.

In the course of the night, a heavy gale came on to blow from the eastward. The squadron soon after separated, the blockaders putting their heads in shore, and the Endymion and Pomone, with the President, keeping theirs seaward. In the night of the 17th they entered the Gulf Stream, and the gale increased in violence. Soon after midnight, the Endymion lost her bowsprit, fore and main masts and mizzen topmast, and lay a complete wreck, at the mercy of the winds and waves. She labored so violently, and was in such jeopardy, that Captain Hope felt obliged to throw overboard the whole of his spar deck guns, in order to save the ship.

Decatur was seriously apprehensive that the President, being crippled, slightly manned, and necessarily in much disorder, must have foundered, carrying with her his brave followers, who remained wounded on board of her. On the return of day, she was nowhere to be seen.

The gale having abated, jurymasts were rigged on the Endymion, and she resumed her course. On the passage, another gale, of three days' duration, and even greater violence than the first, was encountered. The ship, however, survived it, and arrived at Bermuda on the 26th of January. Nothing had been heard of the President. Two days after, Decatur's anxiety was relieved by her safe arrival in port, and by the sight of such of his brave companions as had not yielded to the severity of their wounds, and the necessary discomforts of their situation.

The exultation occasioned by the arrival of the President at Bermuda, as a prize to a British razee and four frigates, was a very great compliment to Commodore Decatur and to the American navy. An artful attempt was made to make it appear that she had been captured by the Endymion alone. To keep up this delusion, and deceive the British people into the belief, that their navy was still invincible, the Endymion was sent to England with the President as her prize, and formally announced as such on her arrival.

Captain Hayes, in his official report, gave some color to this calumny, intended as a salvo to the national pride, which had been wounded in so many other engagements during the war, by saying, "When the effect produced by the Endymion's well directed fire upon the President is witnessed, it cannot be doubted but that Captain Hope would have succeeded in either capturing or sinking her, had none of the squadron been in sight." Yet, in an earlier part of this same letter, he furnishes the following self-refutation; "Captain Hope's exertions enabled him to get his ship alongside of the enemy at half an hour past five o'clock in the evening, which was continued with great gallantry and spirit on both sides for two hours and a half, when, the Endymion's sails being cut from the yards, the enemy got ahead." How, under these circumstances, "Captain Hope would have succeeded in capturing or sinking her, had none of the squadron been in sight," is difficult

to conceive. But it is not difficult to conceive that, if the Endymion was not already beaten, but only dismantled and disabled, with what ease the President, outsailing her, and being under command, could have taken what position she pleased, and torn her to pieces by raking broadsides, without herself receiving further injury.

Captain Hayes's report is rendered still more inconsistent with itself, by his saying, at the outset, "It is with great pleasure I have now to inform you of the success of the squadron in the capture of the United States ship President, Commodore Decatur, on Sunday night, after an anxious chase of eighteen hours." And Rear-Admiral Hotham, in reporting the circumstance to his superior, further refutes the calumny in the commencement of his despatch. "I have the honor to acquaint you with the capture of the United States ship President, on the 15th instant, by the force described in the margin, (the Majestic, Tenedos, Endymion, Pomone,) which I had collected off the bar of New York, under Captain Hayes."

The exultation occasioned among the British by the result of this engagement, the effort to make it appear that a British frigate had, or "would have, captured" an American frigate of her own rate, was the highest compliment they could have paid to our navy. Not being yet prepared to look upon it in this light, Decatur felt wounded by the calumny, and thought it necessary to make a communication in refutation

of it to the navy department; whilst one of the midshipmen of the President, Mr. Robert Randolph, resorted to the more summary and midshipmanlike process of severely caning the government editor at Bermuda, who had been most forward to give it circulation.

The attempt to assign to the Endymion so conspicuous a share in the capture, stirred the resentment of the officers of the other ships, especially those of the Pomone. Their mutterings of discontent were even allowed to be heard by the officers of the President. Some of them went so far as to say, that, if the Admiralty did them justice, it would give them salvage for the Endymion. Admiral Cochran, who commanded in chief on the station, on his return from New Orleans, gave a dinner to the officers of the President. The capture of the President having been adverted to by some one not conspicuous for his good taste, the Admiral suppressed the discussion by dryly observing, "She was completely mobbed."

The personal reception of Commodore Decatur by the civil, military, and naval authorities at Bermuda, was such as was alike due to his station and character, and creditable to them. Every attention was paid to him, that courtesy and delicacy could suggest. The senior naval officer at Bermuda took the earliest occasion of despatching him to New London on his parole, in the Narcissus frigate, Captain Alexander Gordon, from whom he received the kindest attention. Their

association resulted in a warm friendship. Long before his arrival, the news of his capture and safety had reached that place, through the attentive courtesy of Admiral Hotham, who, desirous to relieve the anxiety of Mrs. Decatur, in case she should, through some other source, hear a rumor of her husband's engagement and capture, sent a flag of truce into New London, with the letter which Decatur had written the morning after the action, enclosed in another to the commanding officer at Fort Trumbull, informing him that Commodore Decatur had gone to Bermuda in good health, "having been captured in the United States frigate President, on the 15th instant, by a *detachment* of his Majesty's ships."

The Narcissus arrived at New London, on the 21st of February. Rear-Admiral Sir Henry Hotham was lying off the port, with his flag on board the Superb. So soon as he learned that Decatur was on board of her, he wrote to him, cordially congratulating him on the restoration of peace between the two countries, the treaty for which he announced as having been signed at Ghent, on the 24th of December, ratified by the Prince Regent on the 28th, brought to New York by the Favorite on the 11th of February, and ratified by the Senate and President of the United States on the 17th. He also enclosed a letter from Mrs. Decatur, which he had offered his services to that lady to forward to Bermuda, and added his felicitations on Decatur's arrival at

this season of general rejoicing. This letter was transmitted by the Admiral's flag captain, who was directed to afford "any accommodations which Commodore Decatur will allow the Rear-Admiral to provide for his landing."

This acceptable courtesy from a former enemy, so honorable to both parties, was a just foretaste of the warmth of Decatur's reception from his own countrymen, when he again set foot on his native land. Detailed accounts of the brilliant manner in which he had defended the President had closely preceded his arrival, and though a painful sensation had been experienced far and wide at the loss of so many gallant countrymen, yet it was everywhere felt that they had not died in vain, since, in yielding up their lives on the altar of patriotism, they had bequeathed new honor to the American name. It was felt that Decatur had won for himself a new wreath of glory. Such was the enthusiasm at New York, whence the President had so recently sailed, that the ship carpenters of the port came forward and volunteered sixteen hundred days' work, as their magnanimous contribution towards the construction of a frigate, expressly for him, to take the place of the one which he had so gloriously defended.

Such was the feeling that animated American bosoms towards Decatur, when, on the morning of the 22d of February, he landed at New London. This day, of happy omen, had been set

apart by the inhabitants to celebrate the return of peace. In the midst of the general joy at an event, which patriotism and humanity could alike hail with delight, it became known that Decatur had reached the port, and was about to land. He was met by the population in mass, greeted with enthusiastic acclamation, and, ropes being attached to his carriage, he was drawn through the streets to his lodgings, amidst cheers, waving of banners and handkerchiefs, and blessings from the lips of the fair and the venerable. The hero, conquered by circumstances, yet conquering, was still triumphant in the hearts of his countrymen. He was overcome by his reception. The contending emotions at work in his bosom for a moment mastered his self-composure, and covered his visage with manly tears. He would have expressed his heartfelt sense of this generous reception; he might have wished to say how, when pressed by numbers, he had cherished the heroic hope of exchanging his laggard ship for the Endymion, and offering her to this same population as the proudest of his trophies.

But modesty and emotion alike kept him silent, and the crowd, interpreting and sharing his feelings, rent the air with tumultuous and heart-eloquent acclamations. The evening of this happy day closed with a general illumination, and a brilliant festal reunion, which brought together as friends the descendants of a common stock, whom an unnatural war, the offspring of cruel and unjust

pretensions on the part of England, and jealousies, that remained as her only heritage of her lost colonial sway over us, had for a season rendered enemies. The music, the dance, the conviviality of the festive board, blended harmoniously together those who had so recently grappled in deadly strife.

It has been objected to the peace thus happily concluded, that it did not provide by treaty against a resumption by England of those flagrant violations of our rights, to resist which the war was begun; illegal blockades, by which she assumed, under authority of her orders in council, to render neutral vessels liable to capture for visiting extensive lines of coast, which she did not even pretend to guard; and, above all, the impressment of our seamen from on board our merchant ships. But her orders in council had been revoked before she even knew that we had declared war. Her illegal blockades had therefore ceased. By her own definition of blockades, in her treaty with Russia in 1801, she had recognized the provision of the national code, which, to make a blockade effective, required the presence of an adequate force.

This cause of war having been removed, we had still continued the war to resist the impressment of our seamen. The general peace in Europe, which had preceded our own, now arrested those belligerent rights, under color of which England had obtained entrance on board our merchant ships, and, being there, pretended to exercise a municipal

law of her own, by virtue of which she claimed the services of her seamen wherever she might find them, and, being judge in her own case, took many of ours also. The pretext for the exercise of this violence had, therefore, also ceased. It was strongly desired by our government, and would have been gratifying to the nation, had the treaty contained stipulations for the relinquishment of these practices.

But they were already forbidden by the code of nations. No nation acquiesced in them. Ours had made war to resist them, and it was solemnly announced in the instructions to our negotiators, made public before the peace, that we would make war to resist them again. England has practically conceded what we most strenuously contended for. She has given strict orders to her cruisers, throughout the world, to respect our merchantmen. She will not even molest a slaver, by our laws a pirate, under the American flag. The declaration of war to resist her illegal practices, and the mode in which it had been waged by sea always, and towards the close of it by land, had been eminently advantageous to our national character. Though we plunged into it rashly and impulsively, with the property of our merchants exposed on every sea, and without adequate preparation, verifying a reproach against popular governments, as old as when the father of history wrote, "Whatever a tyrant undertakes, has the merit of previous concert and design; but the people are always rash;

destitute of judgment, their actions resemble the violence of a torrent," yet the torrent's violence had borne us on to victory. The energy of liberty was found as effective in war as in the more congenial and benignant triumphs of peace. We won for ourselves a self-respect, and a respect from others, which now leave us as little likely to be encroached upon by others, as to become in turn the encroachers.

On the day after the joyful celebration of this peace in New London, Decatur commenced his journey to New York, where he arrived on the 26th of February. As is usual after the loss of a ship, a court of inquiry was soon after instituted to investigate the circumstances connected with the capture of the President. Commodore Alexander Murray, senior officer of the navy, was President of the court, and the Honorable Cadwalader D. Colden, of New York, Judge Advocate. After a careful examination of many witnesses, the court united in the opinion that the capture of the President was owing to her injury and loss of time by striking on the bar, which was occasioned by a mistake of the pilots. Commodore Decatur and his officers were exonerated from all blame in connection with this disaster, and great credit was given to them for their exertions in getting her afloat.

The court was also of opinion, that, when the enemy's squadron was discovered, every measure that seamanlike skill and prudence could suggest

to escape from it was adopted ; and when an action with the Endymion became inevitable, in the presence of a superior force, and under circumstances "which must have appeared," to use the language of the report, "to render all opposition unavailing, otherwise than as it might affect the honor of our navy and the character of our seamen, they fought with a spirit which no prospect of success could have heightened; and if success could have met its common reward, the Endymion's name would have been added to our list of naval conquests. In this unequal conflict, the enemy gained a ship, but the victory was ours." "We think it due to Commodore Decatur, and his heroic officers and crew, to notice the proposition he made to board the Endymion, when he found she was coming up, and the manner in which this proposition was received by his gallant crew. Such a design, at such a time, could only be conceived by a soul without fear, and approved with enthusiastic cheering by men regardless of danger. Had not the enemy perceived the attempt, and availed himself of the power he had, in the early part of the action, to shun the approach of the President, the American flag might now be waving over the Endymion." "We conclude by expressing our opinion that Commodore Decatur, as well during the chase as through his contest with the enemy, evinced great judgment and skill, perfect coolness, the most deter-

mined resolution and heroic courage; that his conduct, and the conduct of his officers and crew, are highly honorable to them, and to the American navy, and deserves the warmest gratitude of their country."

In transmitting this just and flattering opinion to Commodore Decatur, the Secretary of the Navy took occasion to add the following expression of his own feelings, and those of the President of the United States. "It would be equally unjust to your own merit, as well as to my sentiments, to pass over this investigation with a formal approbation. I have, therefore, to express to you, in the fullest manner, the high sense of approbation which the President and this department entertain for your professional character, as an officer, who, in every instance, has added lustre to the stars of the Union; and whose brilliant actions have raised the national honor and fame, even in the moment of surrendering your ship to an enemy's squadron of vastly superior force, over whose attack singly you were decidedly triumphant; and you will be pleased to present to each of your gallant officers and crew the thanks of your government for their brave defence of the ship and the flag of the United States."

CHAPTER XIII.

War with Algiers. — Decatur appointed to command a Squadron. — Sails from New York. — Arrives at Gibraltar. — Receives Intelligence of the Algerine Squadron. — Pursues and attacks the Admiral's Ship. — Captures a Frigate and Brig, and arrives at Algiers. — Terms of Peace prescribed by Decatur and Mr. Shaler. — Peace signed. — Captives released. — Death-blow to the piratical System.

The gratitude of his country to Decatur, and her appreciation of the value of his services, were soon after practically manifested by his appointment to the most important command with which he had yet been honored. The Dey of Algiers had taken advantage of our rupture with England, and had, as there was reason to believe, been incited by that power to prey upon our commerce. The Dey had pretended to find cause for annulling the existing treaty with us, in the quality and quantity of a shipment of military and naval stores, which we had made to him in fulfilment of its stipulations. He dismissed our Consul, Mr. Tobias Lear, former secretary and friend of Washington, by the Allegany, the ship which had brought the unsatisfactory presents. A timely present of naval stores, which he had received shortly before from England, in anticipation of this

conjuncture, now enabled him to equip his fleet. The benevolent gift consisted of spars, cables, anchors, cordage, powder, and cannon balls, sufficient to load two large ships and a brig, the whole being under convoy of a British man-of-war.

In the summer of 1812, he sent out his cruisers, amounting to five frigates, three corvettes, two brigs, and one xebec, and one schooner, with orders to capture our merchantmen. The prospect of an English war, and of Algerine depredations, had probably diminished the number of our vessels in the Mediterranean and its neighborhood. The only American prize made by the Algerines (and it was to prove a costly one to them) was the brig Edwin of Salem. She was carried into Algiers, and her crew subjected to slavery.

The existing war with England prevented our government from resisting these hostilities by a display of naval force before Algiers. To recover our suffering fellow-citizens from the worst kind of bondage, and restore them to their afflicted friends, the government caused a private agent to proceed to Algiers, and appearing as if on behalf of some American merchants in Spain, solicitous for the relief of their captive fellow-countrymen, to offer three thousand dollars for each, as the price of their release. The avarice of the Dey was not tempted by this munificent offer. His policy aimed rather at increasing the number of his American captives, with the view of compelling us to renew our

treaty on new terms still more gratifying to his rapacity.

Peace with England left our government at liberty to deal with this new enemy, in a manner better suited to the growing pride and spirit of the country, which the events of the late war had fostered. On the 2d of March, less than a fortnight after peace was proclaimed with England, Congress authorized the President to equip and employ such of the ships of war of the navy, as he might deem necessary, in active hostilities against Algiers. Under this authority, two squadrons, to include the whole disposable force of our navy, were ordered to be immediately fitted for sea. Commodore Bainbridge, having his flag on board of the ship of the line Independence, was ordered to command one of these squadrons, which was to rendezvous at Boston.

Commodore Decatur was assigned to the other, consisting of the frigate Guerriere, of fifty-four guns, Commander Lewis, as his flagship; the Macedonian, of forty-eight guns, again under command of Captain Jacob Jones; the Constellation, also of forty-eight guns, Captain Charles Gordon; the sloop Ontario, of twenty-two guns, Commander Jesse D. Elliot; brig Epervier, of eighteen guns, Lieutenant Commanding John Downes; Firefly, of fourteen guns, Lieutenant Commanding George W. Rodgers; brigs Flambeau, of twelve guns, Lieutenant Commanding J. B. Nicolson, and Spark, of twelve guns, Lieutenant Commanding T. Gamble;

and schooners Spitfire, of eleven guns, Lieutenant Commanding A. J. Dallas, and Torch, of ten guns, Lieutenant Commanding W. Chauncey.

It is highly complimentary to Decatur, and evincive of the sense which the government entertained of his services, that this important command should have been tendered to him before the result of the court of inquiry into the capture of the President was known. Early in March, he received a private letter from the Secretary of the Navy, dated on the same day with the order to report himself to the court of inquiry, offering him the command of the Guerriere with the first squadron to be despatched to Algiers; that of the ship of the line Washington, which was to form part of the second squadron; or the command of the Boston navy yard. "In short, my dear Sir," said the Secretary, "your wishes are to be consulted; any service or any station, that is at the disposal of this department, rely upon it, you may command."

With grateful thanks for the honor tendered to him, he expressed a desire rather to remain on shore, than to act in a subordinate capacity, lest, having so long commanded in chief, it might appear that the confidence of the government had been withdrawn from him in consequence of his recent misfortune. He, however, willingly offered to accept the command of the Guerriere and the first squadron, if he could have leave, on the arrival of Commodore Bainbridge in the Mediterranean, to shift his pendant to one of the sloops and return

home, when he expressed his desire to be assigned to a shore station in one of the Middle States, for the reëstablishment of his health, still suffering, though he forbore to allude to the circumstance, from the effects of his wound, from which, in fact, he never entirely recovered. He asked the further indulgence of taking with him on board the Guerriere as many of the officers and crew of the President as might be disposed to accompany him. This last request, significant of his generous attachment to his shipmates and of theirs to him, was, like his other requests, readily granted. The crew of the President, as they arrived from Bermuda, went in mass to the Guerriere. Many of them had been constantly under his command, since he was appointed to the Chesapeake, having followed him from ship to ship.

Decatur's squadron had its rendezvous at New York, where the smaller vessels had been collected, towards the close of the war with England, by Commodore David Porter, to act as a flying squadron of fast sailing vessels for the annoyance of the enemy's commerce. Being in a more advanced state of preparation than that of Commodore Bainbridge, it got first to sea, leaving New York on the 20th of May, 1815. Mr. William Shaler, since so long and favorably known as our Consul-General at Algiers, and who has left a valuable memorial of his residence there, had been appointed joint commissioner, with Commodores Bainbridge and Decatur, for negotiating a peace with Algiers. Mr.

Shaler now sailed in the Guerriere, and became the cabin companion of Decatur.

When a few days out, the squadron experienced a heavy gale, which sprung the brig Firefly's masts, which were very taunt, and made it necessary for her to return to New York to refit. The other vessels pursued their course in safety. After passing the Azores, they chased and spoke every vessel they saw, to obtain intelligence of the Algerine squadron.

Decatur proceeded first to Cadiz, near the entrance of the Mediterranean, to learn whether the Algerine squadron was within or without the straits, before entering a sea, from which the exit is often attended with long delay. Without entering the port of Cadiz, Decatur communicated with our Consul at that place, and learned that the Algerine squadron, consisting of three frigates and several smaller vessels, had been cruising without the straits, but was believed to have returned to the Mediterranean. This intelligence was confirmed by our Consul at Tangier, at the mouth of the straits, who stated that the Algerine Admiral Hammida, in the frigate Mashouda, had touched at Tangier two days before the appearance of our squadron off the port, and had passed up the Mediterranean.

On the 15th of June, Decatur arrived at Gibraltar, after a very short passage for a squadron, especially when so much time had been lost in chasing, and obtained further intelligence that the

Algerine Admiral would probably be found off Cape de Gat, waiting for a subsidy of half a million of dollars, which the Spanish government was to pay him for the continuance of peace. Decatur sailed round the Bay of Gibraltar with his squadron, exciting, by its appearance, no little admiration, and perhaps some annoyance in the breasts of our recent enemies, by the presence in the squadron of more than one captured British ship. Many boats, filled with citizens and officers of the garrison, came off to examine the squadron. He barely remained long enough to communicate with our Consul on shore, and to collect several of the vessels, which, having separated at sea, had got in the day before him. Having effected these objects, he bore away with a light but favorable wind up the Mediterranean, full of the hope of falling in with the Algerine squadron.

During the short interval, which the squadron had passed in the Bay, a despatch vessel was sent to Algiers to notify the Dey of its presence in the Mediterranean, and several others to carry the same intelligence to the Algerine squadron.

The great despatch, which Decatur had used in equipping his squadron, making his passage across the Atlantic, and following his adversary when he got intelligence of him, was crowned with merited success. Early on the 17th of June, when nearly up with Cape de Gat, being about twenty miles from the land, a large sail was discovered further from the land in the southeast by the Constella-

tion, which made the signal for an enemy's ship; when chase was immediately given to her by the whole squadron, which had been much scattered by the Macedonian and some of the smaller vessels having been sent in chase of several strange sails in shore. Signal was made to the Constellation, which was nearest to the enemy, to resume her station in the squadron, which was on the beam of the flagship, and for the squadron to prepare for action.

The supposed Algerine was soon plainly in sight from the whole squadron, evidently a frigate under her three topsails, with the main to the mast, and her head to the southward, towards the African coast. Commander Lewis asked permission of Commodore Decatur to make sail; but with characteristic judgment, he conjectured that the stranger, ignorant of our squadron being in the Mediterranean, supposed it to be British, and therefore did not attempt to escape, which actually proved to be the case. He remarked to Commander Lewis, "Do nothing to excite suspicion; she lies well as she is now." At this conjuncture, owing to some unfortunate mistake, probably among the quartermasters of the Constellation, she showed American colors. Decatur, to repair the mischief, immediately set an English ensign, and the whole squadron followed his example. But the alarm was already given. The stranger, really an Algerine frigate, the Admiral's ship of their squadron, immediately bore up with her head towards Al-

giers, and in an instant, a space of time which seemed almost like magic to the Americans, accustomed as they were to rapid evolutions, the Algerine was under a cloud of canvass and rapid headway to escape. "Quicker work," remarked a spectator in describing the action to the writer, "was never done by better seamen."

When this occurred, the Constellation still led the squadron, being about a mile from the enemy, and about half a mile ahead of the Epervier, which came next; the Guerriere was on the starboard quarter of the Epervier; the Ontario was on the larboard beam of the Epervier, about half a mile in shore. These were the headmost vessels of the squadron; the others were scattered at various distances further from the enemy. In manœuvring to obey the order for resuming her station, the Constellation soon after opened her fire on the Algerine, which he returned. At this period, the enemy, apparently giving up all hope of keeping ahead of so many chasers in the long run to Algiers, suddenly wore ship, and put his head to the northward and eastward for the Spanish coast, probably with the hope of escaping into Carthagena. This manœuvre of the Algerine laid his head in the direction of the Ontario, which ship came down under a press of sail, and passed across the bow of the Algerine within a quarter of a mile.

In the mean time, the other leading vessels having instantly altered their course in pursuit, the Guerriere passed between the Constellation on the starboard and the Epervier on her larboard hand,

and approached so near the Algerine, that the musketry in the tops could play effectively on the decks of the Guerriere. One of the men at the wheel, and several others of the crew, were wounded by this fire; but Decatur, disregarding it, stood on, steering so as barely to clear the yardarms of the Guerriere of those of the enemy, and, ranging broadside and broadside with her, opened his whole battery with terrible effect.

The first broadside, delivered with coolness and precision, and at so short a distance, created awful destruction on board the Algerine. The heroic Grand Admiral Rais Hammida, who had been wounded earlier in the action, by a shot from the Constellation, remaining seated on the quarter-deck, on a species of pulpit, which raised him above the hammock rails, and enabled him to look over them, was literally cut in two, by a forty-two pound shot from one of the Guerriere's carronades.

Many of the officers and crew were likewise cut down. The second broadside was equally murderous. It wholly decided the contest. The crew, deprived of the presence and encouragement of their heroic commander, began to desert their quarters and seek refuge in the hold. A few musketeers alone remained in sight, discharging their pieces with coolness and deliberation, and by their calm self-devotion redeeming the honor of the crescent. They were soon shot down by the marines and topmen, and resistance temporarily ceased. No signal of surrender had been made

by the Algerine. But Decatur, desirous to spare the unnecessary effusion of blood, ordered the fire of the Guerriere to cease. They were enemies, barbarians, pirates; but they were vanquished, they were about to become his prisoners, and, as such, objects of his protection.

Passing ahead of the Algerine, the Guerriere took up a position on her starboard bow. At the close of the firing, one of the Guerriere's main deck guns had burst, creating a scene of havoc around. The Epervier was now on the starboard quarter of the Algerine, and the Guerriere being out of the range of the Epervier's guns, she now opened her fire on the enemy, who was seen to put his helm up and edge away more off the wind, as if with a renewed intention of escaping. This was perceived at the moment only on board the Epervier; and the daring and seamanlike manner in which this little brig of sixteen guns was manœuvred by Commander Downes, around a heavy frigate of forty-six guns, excited merited admiration throughout the squadron, and won the warm approbation of Decatur.

Opening his fire on the starboard quarter, he subsequently took a position under her cabin windows, then on the larboard quarter and beam, backing and filling his sails, to keep an advantageous position, and to keep clear of an enemy so close aboard, and of such overpowering size, under a constant fire of musketry directed upon him from the elevation of the ship's ports, tops, and

bulwarks, with the same quick tact and seamanlike dexterity, as if the manœuvres of his little brig in a roadstead had alone claimed his attention, whilst, at the same time, he delivered nine consecutive broadsides with such effect, that the Algerine's helm was soon seen hard down, and her head flying briskly into the wind, whilst signal was at length made that she had surrendered.

The Guerriere had four wounded by musket shots from the enemy, one of whom died; three were killed and seven wounded by the bursting of the gun. Captain Lewis was now sent from the Guerriere to take possession of the prize, accompanied by Midshipmen Howell and Hoffman, the latter being Commodore Decatur's aid. The prize presented to the boarding officers a painful spectacle of destruction and carnage, almost entirely effected by the two terrible broadsides of the Guerriere. Her decks and bulwarks were stained with the slaughter of the Admiral and thirty of his followers. Four hundred and six of her crew remained alive as prisoners, many of them severely wounded. She proved to be the Algerine frigate Mashouda, of forty-six guns, bearing the Grand Admiral's flag of Rais Hammida.

This heroic man was not a renegade Scotchman, as has been generally stated. He was a mountaineer, of the warlike tribe of Kabyles, which the French have since found so indomitable. By superior intelligence and valor, he had risen from the humblest station to the chief command

of the Algerine navy. The daring character of his achievements had rendered him a worthy antagonist of the chief, before whom he had now fallen. Captain of a frigate at an early age, he had captured, at noonday, off Gibraltar, a Portuguese frigate of superior force by boarding. Raised for this achievement to the rank of admiral, he cruised, in 1810, with the Mashouda and two other frigates, off the Rock of Lisbon, and boldly offered battle to a Portuguese line of battle ship and three frigates, which, intimidated by his prowess, declined the encounter. In the Mashouda he had subsequently captured a Tunisian frigate in command of an admiral. Such had been Rais Hammida, the Decatur of Algiers. His country, as such, having now passed away, leaving no annals to record the achievements of her brave men, this brief notice, associating his name with that of Decatur, may serve as a memorial of his valor.

In the afternoon succeeding the capture of the Mashouda, signal was made for all captains to repair on board the flagship. They were received by Decatur in his cabin, the table of which was strewed with a collection of cimeters, attaghans, and Turkish daggers and pistols, taken from the Mashouda. Decatur remarked to the commanders, that he supposed they would each be pleased to possess some memento of their prize, and he had collected what they saw for distribution among them. Turning to Commander Downes, he then remarked, that, as the Epervier,

had been fortunate in obtaining a favorable position, and as she had been throughout the action just where she should be, (indeed, he declared he had never seen a vessel more skilfully manœuvred, nor so heavy a fire kept up from so small a vessel,) he thought that Captain Downes was fairly entitled to the first selection of weapons, and begged him to choose accordingly. The choice of what remained was assigned according to rank to the other commanders.

Having placed a prize crew on board the Mashouda, Decatur sent her into Carthagena, under convoy of the Macedonian. The prisoners were landed there, to relieve his ships of their presence, and promote the recovery of the wounded among them. Having received some refreshments from the shore, he again bore away to the eastward, along the coast of Spain, in pursuit of the rest of the Algerine squadron, consisting of two frigates and several smaller vessels, which he had reason to believe were still in that neighborhood. On the 19th of June, when off Cape Palos, he discovered and gave chase to a heavy brig, which proved to be an Algerine, mounting twenty-two guns, and manned with a crew of one hundred and eighty men.

When the chase had continued three hours, the brig, being in shore, ran into shoal water, where the Guerriere and other heavy vessels could not follow. Decatur made signal for the Epervier, Spark, Torch, and Spitfire to continue

the pursuit. She kept up a running fire with these vessels without surrendering, and ran on shore between the Martello towers of Estacio and Albufera, erected on this coast for the express purpose of observing the approach of Barbary pirates, on their kidnapping expeditions. Part of her crew now took to their boats. One of them was sunk by a shot from the pursuing vessels. The rest reached the shore in safety. Twenty-three men were found dead on her decks, and eighty were made prisoners. The brig, which was called the Estedio, was got afloat and sent into Carthagena.

Having reason to believe that the two remaining Algerine frigates and other cruisers had sought the protection of neutral ports, it being reported that one of the frigates had got into Alicante, and the other under Cape Cerrera, (it subsequently proved that they had sought refuge in Malta,) Decatur, with admirable judgment, now determined to proceed immediately to Algiers, with the probability of getting there before those whom he was pursuing, and in the confident expectation of intercepting them at the entrance of the port, and either capturing them, or rendering the Dey's dread of such capture, added to the loss of the frigate and brig, and the death of the favorite Admiral, conducive to the immediate conclusion of peace. With these judicious views and motives, Decatur now shaped his course for Algiers. On the passage, he called his captains together in

council, and, after expressing to them his hopes of obtaining a favorable treaty from Algiers, as a consequence of what had already been accomplished, and of the Dey's apprehensions for the rest of the squadron, informed them that, should these hopes fail, he purposed, with their approbation, to attack the batteries, and burn their ships, putting everything at hazard on the result. The council coincided with him in opinion; and it was accordingly determined to attack the shipping and batteries of Algiers, should the Dey refuse to treat on the terms that were to be proposed to him. With these intentions, Decatur arrived with his squadron before Algiers, on the 28th of June.

On the following morning, he displayed a white flag at the foremast head of the Guerriere, and the Swedish flag at the main, as an indication of his desire to make a communication through the medium of the Swedish Consul, Mr. Norderling, who, since the departure of our Consul, had signalized himself by friendly offices to our enslaved countrymen. At noon, a boat from Algiers came on board the Guerriere, with Mr. Norderling and the Algerine captain of the port. Decatur asked the captain of the port what had become of their squadron. He replied, "By this time it is safe in some neutral port." "Not the whole of it," responded Decatur. He then gave information of the capture of the frigate and brig, and the death of Hammida. The Algerine shook his head, and

smiled incredulously, as if he suspected Decatur of an attempt, by the use of stratagem, to derive advantage from their fears. The lieutenant of Hammida, who had been retained on board the Guerriere, was now called up, and appearing, wasted by wounds and mental anguish, circumstantially detailed the occurrences which Decatur had briefly stated.

The captain of the port was deeply moved by the disastrous intelligence. Shocked by the fate of the heroic Admiral, and apprehending the worst for the rest of their squadron, and his comrades on board of it, he now expressed the belief that a treaty might be negotiated. He asked to be informed on what terms peace could be restored with the United States. Mr. Shaler and Decatur now informed him, that no treaty could be made but on the basis of the complete and final relinquishment, on the part of Algiers, of any claim for tribute.

The commissioners now handed to the captain of the port a letter from the President of the United States to the Dey of Algiers. It stated that Algiers, having declared war against the United States, made captives of some of their citizens, and done them other injuries without cause, Congress had authorized hostilities against the regency, and sent out a squadron to carry them into effect. This squadron carried with it the alternative of peace or war. It remained for the Dey to choose between them. The President expressed the hope that the Dey, contrasting the miseries of war with

the advantages of a friendly intercourse with a rising nation, would be disposed to prefer the latter. But peace, to be durable, must, he said, be founded on stipulations equally beneficial to both parties; and on this basis alone was it desired by the American government. He announced William Shaler, and Commodores Bainbridge and Decatur, as persons duly authorized to conclude such a peace.

The commissioners accompanied the President's letter by one from themselves, equally conciliatory and still more brief. It announced their readiness to open negotiations for the restoration of peace and harmony between the two countries, on terms just and honorable to both; that they were instructed to treat upon no other basis than that of perfect equality; and that no stipulation for paying tribute to Algiers, under any form whatever, would be agreed to.

On receiving these letters, the captain of the port, solicitous for the return of the Algerine ships, proposed that hostilities should cease during the negotiation, and that persons authorized to treat should land under a pledge of security to return at pleasure. Both propositions were rejected. He was informed that hostilities, as far as respected vessels, could not cease a moment, and that the negotiation could be carried on nowhere but on board the Guerriere. The captain of the port and the Swedish Consul now returned on shore. On the following day, being the 30th of June, they

came back with authority to treat on the proposed basis, and manifested great eagerness for the speedy conclusion of the treaty.

The commissioners now produced the draft of a treaty, such as they were willing to conclude, and from which they would not in any particular depart. It provided for a firm, inviolable, and universal peace and friendship between the President of the United States and the Dey, and their respective citizens and subjects; community of favors and privileges in what was already, or might be hereafter, granted to any other nation; that no tribute, under any form or name whatever, should ever be required; that all the Americans in possession of the Dey, amounting to ten, more or less, and all the Algerines in possession of the Americans, amounting to five hundred, more or less, should be mutually delivered up; that just and full compensation should be made by the Dey to such American citizens as had been captured, or deprived of their property, by him, in violation of the former treaty; that, in case of hostilities between either of the parties and other nations, free ships should make free goods; that the persons and property of citizens or subjects of either party found on board of prizes should be given up; that vessels of either, seeking the ports of the other for provisions or for repairs, should receive hospitality, and be allowed, if necessary, to land, and reëmbark their cargoes without paying duties; that, in cases of shipwreck, succor, pro-

tection, and assistance, should be mutually rendered; that vessels of either, within cannon shot of the forts of the other, should be defended from assailing enemies; that any Christians whatsoever, captives in Algiers, escaping on board of American ships of war, should not be required back again, nor ransom asked for them.

In case of dispute from a violation of the treaty, no immediate appeal should be made to arms, but a remonstrance should be transmitted from one government to the other, and three months allowed for an answer before any declaration of war. In case of war, citizens and subjects should mutually be allowed to embark with their effects; and should any prisoners of either country be captured by the cruisers of the other, they should not be made slaves, nor forced to hard labor, or confined beyond what might be necessary to secure their safe keeping, until exchanged; that if any of the Barbary States, or other powers at war with the United States, should send any American vessel as a prize into an Algerine port, such prize should not be allowed to be sold there, but compelled to depart after receiving necessary refreshments; but vessels of war of the United States should be allowed to resort to the Algerine ports with their prizes, and to sell them there.

The American Consul was to import whatever he required for his own use from foreign countries free of duty. He was to have exclusive jurisdiction in all cases of dispute arising between

his own countrymen, and assist at any trial before the tribunals of the country, in cases where an American was a party; he was to administer on the estates of all Americans dying within the regency; he was to be allowed the exercise of religious rites within his own house, and secured in all the privileges and immunities of his office.

Such were the conditions upon which alone the commissioners now offered to make peace with Algiers. It struck a first and vital blow at the pretensions and power of the regency; required the restoration of American property already plundered and distributed, the relinquishment of the custom of making slaves of Americans, even captured in time of war, and the abandonment of all claim for tribute in any form, such tribute having been paid heretofore by our own country, and by all the commercial powers that traded to the Mediterranean; which, indeed, was the basis of the system of the Barbary powers, as an alternative for piratical depredations, and from which they derived all their power and consequence. That such a system should have been so long tolerated by the naval powers of Europe, with England at their head, is extraordinary.

The forbearance of the less powerful maritime nations was a consequence of the forbearance of England, so incompatible with her predominating naval power, and the haughty tone with which it was wielded. The secret of this forbearance is

referable to the cravings of her commercial avidity. By the payment of tribute, and the terror of her naval power, she could always secure a safe passage for her ships, laden with her manufactures and the produce of her extended colonies, through the Mediterranean; whilst the Barbary corsairs easily held in check the weaker commercial powers, and, making the transit of their ships insecure, drove the greater portion of their trade to seek protection under the English flag. On this account we have seen England, so long after her susceptibilities were awakened to the enormities of negro slavery and the slave trade, constantly refusing to unite with the other powers of Europe in suppressing a system of piracy, which for centuries had desolated the waters and the shores of the Mediterranean.

That such a policy should have been pursued by a rich and powerful nation, claiming to take the lead alike in civilization and in liberty, is painful and humiliating to our pride of nature; that it should have been openly avowed, as a system of public policy, is inconceivable. Yet so early as 1783, soon after we had emerged from our revolutionary struggle, we find a British statesman, Lord Sheffield, putting forth the following sentiments, but too significant of his country's policy with regard to the Barbary piracies, and in particular of an early and consistent hostility to our commerce, in which the war with Algiers, so triumphantly concluded by Decatur, had its origin; "It is not

probable that the American States will have a very free trade in the Mediterranean. It will not be the interest of any of the great maritime powers to protect them from the Barbary States. If they know their interests, they will not encourage the Americans to be carriers. That the Barbary States are advantageous to the maritime powers is certain. If they were suppressed, the little states of Italy would have much more of the carrying trade." *

This enlightened statesman might also have added, neither would the few ships of these "little states of Italy," which excited his envy, be then captured and their crews enslaved; their peaceful villages, nestling in the bays of the Mediterranean, would not then be invaded; nor men, women, and children, bound to the community of Christendom by the sympathy of a common religion, be then

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* Observations on the Commerce of the American States. Further on he adds, "The armed neutrality would be as hurtful to the great maritime powers, as the Barbary States are useful. The Americans cannot protect themselves from the latter; they cannot pretend to a navy." He has proved himself no true prophet in this respect. But one useful lesson can be gleaned from his speculations; we may learn from an enemy the vital importance to us of a formidable navy, adequate at all times to our protection, alike against the barbarous and the civilized.

The historian Smollett, referring, if with less statesmanship, with more humanity, to the Barbary corsairs, thus laments the policy which tolerated them.

"The existence of Algiers, and other predatory republics, which entirely subsist upon piracy and rapine, petty states of barbarous ruffians, maintained, as it were, in the midst of powerful nations, which they insult with impunity, and of which

torn from their household hearths, from the sanctuary of their altars, the husband often from the wife, the bridegroom from his affianced, parents from their children, and children from their parents, to the horrors of a worse than negro bondage.

Against this accursed system, tolerated, encouraged, even avowed by England, and which, had jealousy of the little Italian states prevailed in our minds over the claims of humanity, we might advantageously have tolerated also, the treaty of Shaler and Decatur now proposed to strike a death-blow. The Algerine captain of the port was not prepared for such rigorous terms. He was of opinion, that the treaty could not be agreed to in its present form, great as the necessities of the Dey really were. The Dey was responsible with his head to the public opinion of

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they exact an annual contribution, is a flagrant reproach upon Christendom; a reproach the greater, as it is founded upon a low, selfish, illiberal maxim of policy. All the powers that border on the Mediterranean, except France and Tuscany, are at perpetual war with the Moors of Barbary, and for that reason obliged to employ foreign ships for the transportation of their merchandise. This employment naturally devolves to those nations, whose vessels are in no danger from the depredations of the barbarians; namely, the subjects of the maritime powers, who, for this puny advantage, not only tolerate the piratical states of Barbary, but even supply them with arms and ammunition, solicit their passes and purchase their forbearance with annual presents, which are in effect equal to tribute; whereas, by one vigorous exertion of their power, they might destroy all their ships, lay their towns in ashes, and totally extirpate those pernicious broods of desperate banditti."

Algiers, which held piracy to be honorable, and which tribute could alone reconcile to the relinquishment of its profits.

The captain of the port strongly objected, for the same reason, to the article which required the restitution of captured property which had already been distributed. He alleged that such a demand had never before been made of Algiers. The commissioners declared that the claim, being just, must be adhered to. The Algerine next inquired whether, if the treaty were signed by the Dey in its present form, the commissioners would engage to restore the captured vessels. This was also refused. The Algerine represented that it was not the present Dey, who had declared the war. The one who declared war, Hadji Ali, for his implacable cruelties surnamed the Tiger, had in fact been assassinated on the 23d of March previous, and his prime minister, who had succeeded him, had been in like manner put to death on the 8th of April. The present Dey, Omar Pacha, who, by his intrepid courage, had won for himself the appellation of "the Terrible Omar," so celebrated afterwards for his defence of Algiers against the English and Dutch under Lord Exmouth, had, therefore, had no agency in the declaration of war; his commissioner acknowledged it to be unjust, and that its declaration was inexcusable.

He begged that our commissioners would take the peculiar position of the Dey into consideration,

and, on his agreeing to terms of peace more favorable than had ever been made with any other nation, restore the captured ships, which were of little value to the Americans, but very important to the Dey, as their restoration could alone reconcile the people to the conditions of the peace. He knew, indeed, from the tumultuary constitution of the government of the regency, and the example of his predecessors, how precarious were his authority and his life. Indeed, his heroic courage and constancy, everywhere conspicuous in the defence of Algiers against Lord Exmouth, could not save him from a violent death. He was held responsible for circumstances, which he could meet like a hero, but could not control. Two years after, when the surname of "the Unfortunate" had taken the place of "the Terrible," he was strangled.

The commissioners saw the impolicy of either discrediting and rendering unpopular (a sure step to deposition) a Dey of commanding character, who was inclined to be just to the United States, or driving him to extremity. They determined that, from personal consideration to the Dey, on his signing the treaty as it stood, they would make him a compliment of the captured ships in their present state. So much being granted, the Dey's commissioner requested that a truce might be proclaimed until the treaty was finally adjusted. This was refused. He even pleaded for three hours. The reply was, "Not a min-

ute; if your squadron appears in sight before the treaty is actually signed by the Dey, and sent off with the American prisoners, ours will capture it."

The most that our commissioners would concede was, that hostilities should cease when the Algerine boat should be perceived returning to the Guerriere with a white flag flying; the Swedish Consul having first pledged his honor, that it should not be displayed unless the treaty was signed, and the prisoners actually in the boat. With this understanding, the Algerine captain of the port returned on shore.

Meantime an Algerine ship of war was descried approaching from the eastward. Decatur hove out the signal for a general chase, and bore down upon her in the Guerriere. As the Algerine was well in with the land, and was crowding all sail, it seemed his intention to receive the fire of our squadron, and crowd past, or run his ship on shore. She was from Tunis, and was filled with soldiers. Decatur was determined she should not escape. He ordered his Turkish sabre and pistols to be laid on the capstan, and resolved to run the Algerine on board, afloat or even aground under the batteries, and leap upon her decks with his followers, before her crew could escape from or destroy her.

This intention he briefly communicated to his crew, who were ordered aft for the purpose, and he called upon them to follow him. Decatur had

dressed himself, in the morning, in full uniform, to receive the Algerine commissioner. He had on his laced coat and hat, tight cassimere pantaloons, long boots, such as were worn at the time, bound at the top with gold lace, and having tassels of gold in front. On his breast he wore the badge of Cincinnatus, the pledge of his being a fit associate of those who had won our revolution. His splendid figure had never appeared so advantageously to the officer from whom the anecdote was received, and who had already been at his side in two engagements. As he now addressed his men, he looked the very ideal of a hero.*

At this moment, when Decatur was wholly absorbed in the proposed accomplishment of a congenial enterprise, the boat of the Algerine commissioner was seen returning from the mole at her utmost speed, with the white flag distinctly displayed. With a visible, but doubtless momentary disappointment, at being balked of his promised adventure, Decatur ordered the Guerriere's head to be hauled off from the land, and directed towards the advancing boat.

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* "Then Xenophon rose up, dressed for war in the most gorgeous armor he could provide; for he thought, if the gods granted him victory, these ornaments would become a conqueror, and if he were to die, they would decorate his fall." The dress of Decatur, as described above, is the same as that in which he is represented in the beautiful full length portrait by Sully, in the City Hall at New York, from which the head on the title-page of this volume was taken.

Quickened in his movements by the exciting scene in the bay, the captain of the port had pulled five miles to the shore and back, and the treaty had been signed within three hours. "Is the treaty signed?" exclaimed Decatur, with impatient earnestness, as the captain of the port and the Swedish Consul reached the deck of the Guerriere. "It is," replied Mr. Norderling; and the treaty was placed in Decatur's hands. "Are the prisoners in the boat?" "They are." "Every one of them?" "Every one, Sir." The captive Americans, wasted by years of bondage and anxiety, now came forward to greet and bless their deliverer, as he stood beneath that banner, which he had so proudly upheld, surrounded by the brave seamen, who yet manned the loosened guns. This was indeed their country. These were their countrymen, who, whilst they had pined in hopeless bondage, had fought in a cause, to which they would have so willingly lent their best energies. This was that Decatur, whose romantic valor in the Tripolitan war was so familiar to them, whose more recent achievements, during the struggle with England, had reached them within their prison walls, and awakened such delightful throbs of exulting patriotism within their bosoms. How doubly welcome liberty, with Decatur for a liberator!

That same day, Mr. Shaler landed at Algiers as Consul-General of the United States, and was received with every honor. All the American prop-

erty, which had been illegally seized in Algiers, and had not yet been disposed of, together with ten thousand dollars, which had been agreed upon as an equivalent for the brig Edwin and her cargo, was immediately placed at the disposal of our Consul, and the terms of the treaty were thus completely fulfilled. By way of commentary on the part, which England had taken in instigating Algiers to the war thus brought to a close, and as evidence of the manner in which her own war with us had disappointed her expectations, it may be well to cite here a remark made by the Dey's Prime Minister to the British Consul, when the treaty had been concluded. "You told us," said he, "that the Americans would be swept from the seas in six months by your navy, and now they make war upon us with some of your own vessels, which they have taken."

It is not easy to overrate the importance of the service, which the American commissioners, by the completion of this treaty, thus rendered to their country and to the whole Christian world. It gave a death-blow to that cruel system, which, for centuries, to the shame of Christendom, had elevated the Barbary powers into baneful importance; a system which had piracy for a means, and tribute and slavery for its objects; tribute to be again expended in fitting out piratical expeditions for new depredations, and slavery to work upon the tenderest sympathies, in order to extort exorbitant ransoms, to be again employed in inflicting new

calamities on outraged humanity. America had now compelled the Dey, by the terror of its arms, to relinquish tribute, to relinquish the enslavement even of prisoners lawfully taken in war. Other nations were shortly to be shamed by our example into the assertion of equal immunities.

The bombardment of Algiers by the British squadron under Lord Exmouth, in 1816, and the extortion, at the cannon's mouth, from the Dey, of a perpetual abolition of Christian slavery within the regency, was the direct result of the American treaty. The pride of England was excited to endure no longer what America had ceased to tolerate. In later times, it has led France to the final overthrow of the Algerine power, and the military possession and progressive colonization of its territory; to be followed happily, perhaps, by the restoration of that fine region to the fertility, wealth, and importance, which, in earlier ages, rendered it one of the finest provinces of the Roman empire.

In the negotiation of this treaty, so important in itself, and attended, as we have seen, by such important results, Decatur derived vast advantage from the coöperation of his firm and able associate, Mr. Shaler. He was every way fitted by his character and qualifications to coöperate efficiently with such a man as Decatur. But it can be easily conceived, how essentially the triumphant success of the expedition was due to the untiring zeal, with which Decatur urged the equipment and depart-

ure of his squadron, the celerity with which he traversed the ocean, captured part of the Algerine squadron, anticipated the arrival of the rest in their own port; to the resistless rigor which he thus exhibited, and to the terrible *prestige* of a name, associated, since early manhood, in these regions with dauntless and successful daring.*

Our difficulties with Algiers were thus happily and honorably concluded on the 30th of June, 1815, just forty-one days from the time the squadron had quitted our own waters. Commodore Decatur and Mr. Shaler drew up a joint despatch, narrating the circumstances attending their negotiation, and announcing its successful result on the 4th of July. It was forwarded with the treaty by the United States brig Epervier, Lieutenant Commanding John Shubrick, which was supposed to have foundered, no certain tidings having been received of her after she passed Gibraltar on the 12th of July.

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* Decatur having communicated officially to Mr. John Quincy Adams, then our minister at London, intelligence of peace with Algiers, that gentleman replied in a letter, from which the following extract is taken. "I have had the honor of receiving your favor of the 11th of July last, containing information of the peace concluded with the Dey and regency of Algiers. I pray you to accept my congratulations on the peace, which we have only to wish may prove as permanent as it is glorious. It is to be hoped that the lesson, which you so opportunely gave to that power, will make a durable impression on its future policy; and I most ardently pray that the example, which you have given, of rescuing our country from the disgrace of a tributary treaty, may become our irrevocable law for all future time."

A vessel answering to her description was subsequently seen in a heavy gale of wind, by a homeward bound English West India fleet. It was conjectured that she might have been run down by one of their ships, or foundered from stress of weather, as did many of the fleet. In her perished the unfortunate Americans, whom Decatur had so recently released from Algerine captivity, and sent rejoicing towards their homes. Lieutenant Shubrick, the commander of the Epervier, besides having been associated with Decatur in two recent actions with frigates, had served with distinction in several other engagements of the war with England, escaping in every instance without a wound. The Algerine war over, he was now hastening home to the young wife and infant child, from whom he had torn himself at the call of duty. The successful termination of the war had also induced Captain Lewis and Lieutenant Neale to seek permission to return home, where they had married sisters, when on the eve of sailing for Algiers. The indulgence of Decatur readily induced him to grant them leave to take passage in the Epervier, in which they also perished. Many and dear were the hopes ingulfed with this unfortunate vessel.

The return of Captain Lewis had left a vacancy on board the Guerriere, which enabled Decatur further to evince his sense of the merit of Commander Downes, by promoting him to the captaincy of the flagship, Lieutenant Shubrick

having relieved him in the command of the Epervier. Decatur thus secured the services of an uncommonly skilful seaman, an energetic, spirited officer, and a very amiable associate, to whom he became warmly attached.

CHAPTER XIV.

Spoliations of Tunis and Tripoli. — Decatur proceeds to Tunis, and demands Indemnity from the Bey. — The Demand granted. — Arrival at Tripoli. — Demand on the Bashaw. — Release of Neapolitan and Danish Captives. — Decatur proceeds to Syracuse; thence to Messina and Naples. — Correspondence with the Neapolitan Government. — Arrives at Gibraltar. — Sails for New York. — His Reception. — Appointed Navy Commissioner. — Receives a Service of Plate from Baltimore, and another from Philadelphia.

After the arrival of our squadron in the Mediterranean, Commodore Decatur had received intelligence, that the regencies of Tunis and Tripoli had both violated their treaties with the United States. The government at home, having no knowledge of the circumstances at the time of his departure, had given him no instructions to demand redress from those powers. Having so

quickly brought the Algerine war to a close, Decatur determined to proceed at once, on his own responsibility, to obtain redress from these new aggressors.

On the 8th of July, 1815, he sailed with his squadron from Algiers, and proceeded up the Mediterranean. As the crews of the vessels were beginning to suffer from the want of refreshments, and some cases of scurvy appeared among them, he put into Cagliari, at the southern extremity of Sardinia, on the 15th of July. After filling water, and refreshing his crews, he sailed again on the 25th, and arrived the following day, after a fine run, in the Bay of Tunis, where he anchored his squadron in a commanding position. Two prizes, sent into Tunis by the American privateer Abellino, during our late war with England, and anchored under the protection of its batteries, the Bey had allowed a British brig to capture and carry out, in violation of our neutral rights and of treaty stipulations. The prizes, thus given up, were valued at forty-six thousand dollars. Decatur sent on shore to demand, through our Consul, Mr. M. M. Noah, the payment of this amount in indemnity of the wrong done to the United States, within twelve hours, on failure of which hostilities were to commence. Mr. Noah thus describes the conversation that ensued between the Bey and himself.

"'Tell your Admiral to come and see me,' said the Bey. 'He declines coming, your High-

ness, until these disputes are settled, which are best done on board ship.' 'But this is not treating me with becoming dignity. Hamuda Pacha, of blessed memory, commanded them to land, and wait at the palace until he pleased to receive them.' 'Very likely, your Highness, but that was twenty years ago.' After a pause, the Bey exclaimed, 'I know this Admiral; he is the same one who, in the war with Sidi Yusef of Trablis, burnt the frigate.' 'The same.' 'Hum! why do they send wild young men to treat for peace with old powers? Then you Americans do not speak truth. You went to war with England, a nation with a great fleet, and said you took their frigates in equal fight. Honest people always speak truth.' 'Well, Sir, and that was true. Do you see that tall ship in the bay, with a blue flag, the Guerriere, taken from the British? That one near the small island, the Macedonian, was also captured, and by Decatur, on equal terms. The sloop near Cape Carthage, the Peacock, was also taken in battle.' The Bey laid down the telescope, reposed on his cushions, and with a small tortoiseshell comb, set with diamonds, combed his beard. A small vessel got under way and came near the batteries; a pinnace with a few men rowed about the harbor, and one person, dressed in the garb of a sailor, was taking soundings. It was Decatur."

To estimate the hardihood of the contemplated attack, it should be stated that the harbor was

difficult of access, and was defended by formidable batteries, under cover of which, three frigates, several corvettes and brigs, and a number of gunboats, were moored in line of battle. The Bey hesitated for a time; he employed the period of truce in proposing that the sum claimed should be paid at the end of a year; but finding the Americans immovable, and that they "spoke truth," he ended, by saying, "Tell your Admiral to land, and all shall be settled to his satisfaction." "I know this Admiral," was a reflection which the Bey appreciated at its just value. Such is the matchless virtue of a name.

Decatur at length landed at Tunis in full uniform, and attended by his staff, on the solemn pledge of the Bey, that "all should be settled to his satisfaction." He was received with every mark of distinction. The foreign consuls waited upon him at the American consulate, to pay their respects and offer their congratulations on the settlement of the difficulties with the regency. Whilst Decatur was conversing with the British Consul, the brother of the Bey's Prime Minister arrived with the money demanded for the two prizes of the Abellino. Causing it to be thrown down on the floor, he turned to the British Consul, and said with indignation, "You see, Sir, what Tunis is obliged to pay for your insolence. You should feel ashamed of the disgrace you have brought upon us. I ask you if you think it just, first to violate our neutrality, and then leave us to be destroyed or pay for your aggressions."

On the 2d of August, Decatur sailed from Tunis with his squadron for Tripoli, where he arrived on the 5th of the same month. The Bashaw of this regency had been duped by the representation of the British Consul, made doubtless in good faith, into the belief that America would be swept from the ocean as a naval power, by Britain, in the then existing war. In like manner he had given up two prizes of the American privateer Abellino, which had sought the hospitality of his port, on the demand of a British cruiser. As a reparation for this injustice, Decatur now demanded the sum of thirty thousand dollars, as an indemnity for the loss occasioned to the American captors by the Bashaw's act; and that, on the rehoisting of the American flag at the consulate, it should receive a salute of thirty-one guns from the Bashaw's castle.

On the first announcement of these demands, the Bashaw promptly rejected them, assembled all his troops, including twenty thousand Arabs, manned his batteries, and threatened an immediate declaration of war against the United States. But on learning the recent occurrences at Algiers and Tunis, remembering the events of some ten years before in the Bay of Tripoli, in which Decatur had been so conspicuous an actor, (for the Bashaw could also say, with better reason than the Bey of Tunis, "I know this Admiral,") and, above all, observing the preparations of the squadron to renew the same scenes, he wisely determined to accede to Decatur's demands, and sent the Governor of Tripoli to treat

on board of the Guerriere, where alone Decatur would negotiate. The Bashaw requested an abatement of the sum demanded for the prize, and, on the American Consul informing Decatur that twenty-five thousand dollars would sufficiently compensate the captors, he consented to receive that sum, if the Bashaw would release ten Christian slaves, which he held in captivity.

Two of these slaves were Danish youths, countrymen of the worthy Mr. Nissen, who had been so indefatigable in exercising kind offices towards the officers of the Philadelphia, whilst captives in Tripoli. The others were Sicilians, being a gentleman with his wife and children, who had been captured together, and involved in one common misfortune. Decatur had a lively recollection of the aid, which the King of the Sicilies had rendered to our squadron, under Preble, whilst operating against Tripoli, and gladly seized the double occasion that offered itself of requiting former benefits to his country. Gratitude for services rendered to one's self, or to one's country, is an impulse of a noble nature, and Decatur felt a pleasure, refined and unalloyed, in receiving these captives on board the Guerriere, astonished at the suddenness of the liberation, and the unexpected agency through which it had been obtained, and yet complimented and put at ease by the assurance of their magnanimous benefactor, that it was but a slight return for former favors received from their country.

Twenty-five thousand dollars were placed in the hands of the American Consul, as the agent of the aggrieved privateersmen; the ten captive Christians were promptly delivered, and the American ensign rehoisted at the consulate, under a salute of thirty-one guns from the Bashaw's Castle, the Guerriere's band, sent on shore for the purpose, playing "Hail Columbia." Peaceful relations with Tripoli were thus happily restored on the 7th of August, 1815, just seventy-one days after the squadron had sailed from New York; during which he had reduced three hostile powers to sue for peace, on terms of his own dictation. In closing the series of very brief letters, in which these triumphant results are reported to the navy department, Decatur took occasion to put forth the following prophetic hope, which was erelong realized; "I trust that the successful result of our small expedition, so honorable to our country, will induce other nations to follow the example; in which case the Barbary States will be compelled to abandon their piratical system."

The next object of Decatur was to seek a snug harbor in a friendly port, with a view to the refreshment of his crews. For this purpose, he left Tripoli on the 9th of August, and shaped his course for Syracuse, where he arrived on the 12th of the same month. Being subjected to quarantine, Decatur was unable to renew his impressions of this interesting place, which he had

so often visited during the Tripolitan war. Having supplied the squadron with water from the well known fountain of Cyane, through which, according to the fable, Pluto descended in pursuit of Proserpine to the world below, he took his departure from Syracuse on the 15th; and having coasted the Sicilian shore at a short distance, passing quite near Catania, at the foot of Mount Ætna, he arrived off Messina on the 20th of August. The pilot, who came on board the Guerriere, refused to take her into the harbor with the wind that was then blowing. Decatur in vain endeavored to persuade him to do so. At length he had a chart of the harbor brought on deck, and asked the pilot if it was correct. The pilot replied that it was, when Decatur immediately determined to take her in himself, unwilling doubtless to throw on Commander Downes the responsibility of navigating the ship against the opinion of the pilot. With the chart before him, he conducted her very dexterously into port, and brought her to anchor in safety. They were immediately admitted to *pratique*, and the Sicilian family went at once on shore, invoking blessings on the head of their benefactor. They were received as if risen from the dead by their friends, who could not sufficiently admire the generous interposition of the American hero. For this, and for humbling those fierce corsairs, who had so often ravaged the shores and waters of Sicily, they hailed him as the "Champion of Christendom."

Leaving Messina about the 1st of September, Decatur conducted his squadron through the Straits of Messina, between the much dreaded Scylla and Charybdis of the ancients, coasted along the rugged shores of Calabria, and passing the foot of Stromboli, forever belching forth its smoke, ashes, and streams of lava, arrived, at the end of a week, in the magnificent Bay of Naples. Leaving behind Capreæ, memorable as the residence of Tiberius, and infamous as the scene of his worst crimes and debaucheries, the squadron dropped anchor at the foot of Vesuvius.

Here the crews were still further refreshed from their toils and privations, and the officers had opportunity to gratify a liberal curiosity amid scenes profusely covered with memorials of the world's masters, and consecrated by undying associations. Pompeii, Herculaneum, Baiæ, the crater of Vesuvius, and the Tomb of Virgil, invited and rewarded the attention of our young countrymen. Decatur shared these gratifications with his followers; but he had one, more touching to his sensibilities, which was wholly his own.

Immediately on his arrival at Naples, he addressed the following note, admirable for its completeness and brevity, to the Marquis di Circello, Neapolitan Secretary of State for foreign affairs;

"I have the honor to inform your Excellency, that, in my late negotiation with the Bashaw of Tripoli, I demanded and obtained the release of eight Neapolitan captives, subjects of his Majesty,

the King of the Two Sicilies. These I have landed at Messina. It affords me great pleasure to have had it in my power, by this small service, to evince to his Majesty the grateful sense entertained by my government of the former aid rendered to us by his Majesty, during our war with Tripoli."

The following gratifying reply, as translated from the original letter in the writer's possession, was returned by the Neapolitan Secretary, who wrote under the impression that Decatur had commanded in chief, during our former war with Tripoli; "Having, in the fulfilment of my duty, laid before the King, my master, the letter which you addressed to me on the 8th instant, in which you have been pleased to communicate to me your having, in your late negotiation with the Bashaw of Tripoli, freed from the slavery of that regency eight subjects of his Majesty, whom you have landed at Messina, his Majesty has charged me to make known to you his sovereign and special gratification for this act of your generosity, which you have been pleased to call gratitude for the slight aid, which the squadron under your command received from his royal government during the war with Tripoli. Whilst taking pleasure in manifesting to you these sentiments of my King, and assuring you, in his name, that the brave American nation will ever find in his ports the best reception, I beg you to accept the assurances of my most distinguished consideration."

The King of Naples had a natural desire to see the hero, who had won for himself so much renown during the war with Tripoli, and who, by his recent treaty with Algiers, abolishing at once the system of tribute and of Christian slavery, so far as the United States was concerned, had given a death-blow to the piratical system of the Barbary powers, of which, for centuries, the kingdom of the Two Sicilies, lying most exposed to the incursions of Tunis and Tripoli, had felt the worst horrors, in the kidnapping and carrying into captivity of its peaceful subjects. He signified, through our Consul, his readiness to receive Decatur at his villa of Portici, on Thursday, the 14th of September, at eleven o'clock.

At the time appointed, Decatur repaired to this charming abode, standing on the shore of the Bay of Naples, in the centre of an amphitheatre unsurpassed for mingled beauty and grandeur of scenery. There the "Champion of Christendom" received a royal welcome, and was personally thanked for the benevolent interference, which had restored eight Neapolitan captives from the horrors of Tripolitan slavery to liberty and to their country; an interference, which Decatur had thought fit to represent as an act of national gratitude for services received, but which the King preferred to consider as a pure impulse of generous magnanimity.

Decatur received also, whilst at Naples, a most gratifying letter from the Danish Consul-General

at that place, Mr. Heigdin, expressing his gratitude for Decatur's interposition in rescuing the two Danish boys from captivity in Tripoli, and assuring Decatur that he would cause the youths to be carefully restored to their country, and would, at the same time, make his government acquainted with the noble act to which they owed their liberation.

Having taken leave of Naples, Decatur steered for Carthagena in the expectation of finding Commodore Bainbridge there, and delivering up to him, as senior officer, the command of our forces in the Mediterranean, preparatory to his own return to the United States. Not finding the Commodore at Carthagena, he sent forward to Malaga the vessels that still remained with him, most of them having already parted company at various periods since the departure from Tripoli.

He soon after sailed alone from Carthagena. Whilst beating down the Mediterranean against a moderate westerly breeze, a squadron of seven sail of men-of-war was descried to the southward, standing to the northward by the wind, under easy sail. Being on the opposite tack from the Guerriere, they approached her rapidly, and were soon made out to be Algerines, four frigates and three sloops, the remainder of the squadron, which had put into Malta for refuge on learning the arrival of ours in the Mediterranean. They were still superior in force to the whole of Decatur's squadron, had it been united. He conjectured, that, finding him

now alone, they might possibly be tempted to break the peace, in the hope of overcoming him and taking his frigate, as a set-off to the one which he had taken from them. Determined at any rate to be prepared, he beat to quarters, cleared for action, and collected his crew on the quarter-deck. "My lads," he said, "those fellows are approaching us in a threatening manner; we have whipped them into a treaty, and if that treaty is to be broken, let them break it. Be careful of yourselves," he added with great earnestness and sternness. "Let any man fire without orders at the peril of his life. But let them fire first, if they will, and we'll take the whole of them."

The crew were sent back to their quarters, and all was expectation, silence, and studious care not to approach too nearly the primed and levelled guns, so as even by an untoward accident to infringe the stern mandate of their chief. The Algerines came on in line of battle, the Admiral bringing up the rear. Keeping away a little, they passed near the Guerriere to leeward in preparation and in silence, until the Admiral came alongside the Guerriere, when the question was abruptly asked in Italian, the *lingua Franca* of the Barbary coast, "*Dove andate?*" "Where are you bound?" Taking the trumpet from the officer of the deck, Decatur instantly shouted in a tone of defiance, "*Dove mi piace,*" "Where I please."

This was not a very civil answer; but the Algerines had approached the Guerriere in a menac-

ing style, and had asked their question somewhat uncivilly. The courtesy of the sea requires that when ships of war at peace approach each other, in the daytime, with their colors displayed, the ship which leaves her course to speak another, whether to obtain intelligence or a conveyance for letters, in commencing a colloquy, should first state the name of the ship seeking information. Decatur, having, as he expressed it to his men, "whipped the Algerines into a treaty," which he was unwilling to break, and had taken salutary and prudent precautions to avoid breaking, did not feel that it was also incumbent on him to give them a lesson in politeness.

He proceeded to Malaga, where he arrived on the 2d of October, and received intelligence that Commodore Bainbridge had arrived at Gibraltar on the 29th of September, where he was lying with his squadron. Decatur dispatched, the same day, all the vessels which he found collected at Malaga, with the exception of the Guerriere, to join the Commodore at Gibraltar, proposing to follow with his own ship in a few days.

Commodore Bainbridge had arrived in the Mediterranean, in the month of August, with the ship of the line Independence, frigate Congress, which had previously carried out a minister to Holland, sloop Erie, brig Chippewa, and schooner Lynx. He had sailed from Carthagena with his squadron on the 13th of September, and touched, in succession, at Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis, with all of which

regencies he found our affairs on the best possible footing; Decatur having everywhere been before him, as we have seen, and adjusted all existing difficulties. The appearance of this additional squadron so soon after the departure of the first had, however, a salutary effect in confirming the pacific views of the Barbary powers towards us. They were especially astonished at the sight of an American line of battle ship, having been persuaded to believe, that the United States were restricted by their treaties with England from building ships of that class. During the consulate of Colonel Lear at Algiers, he had endeavored to undeceive the minister of the Dey on this point; but he replied, "If you are permitted to build seventy-fours, let us see one of them, and we shall be satisfied."

From Tunis Commodore Bainbridge had crossed the Mediterranean to Malaga, where his squadron was further reënforced by the arrival of the frigate United States, brigs Saranac, Boxer, Firefly, and Enterprise, from the United States. Thence he had proceeded to Gibraltar, arriving there, as has been stated, on the 29th of September, and being joined there, on the 3d of October, by Commodore Decatur's squadron, with the exception of the Guerriere, which arrived three days later. Commodore Bainbridge then found himself in command of a squadron of eighteen sail, of which one, bearing his own flag, was a line of battle ship, and five were frigates; by far the largest naval force, that had ever assembled under the American flag; and

this but a few months after a war with the mistress of the ocean.

Commodore Bainbridge, having the whole squadron together, with the exception of the Guerriere, now detailed the ships, which were to remain in the Mediterranean to watch the Barbary powers, and keep in check their piratical propensities. The frigates United States and Constellation, with the sloops Erie and Ontario, were designated for this purpose, and placed under the command of Commodore John Shaw, who commanded the United States. These arrangements being effected, Commodore Bainbridge weighed anchor for home, on the 7th of October, with the remainder of his squadron, consisting of thirteen sail.

This gallant array of vessels, bearing the American flag, was just emerging from the harbor, when the Guerriere was seen to heave in sight round Europa Point; and, standing towards the Independence, she paid the customary salute of honor to the flag of the Commander-in-chief. The salute was duly returned from the Independence. The writer was attached at the time to the Chippewa, a fine brig of sixteen guns, which formed part of Commodore Bainbridge's squadron, and well remembers the impression made on his mind by this spectacle, to which a bright October sun lent its improving influence.

The Guerriere hove to, as she approached the stern of the Independence. An officer of rank appeared in the gangway of the former ship, and descended into the gig, which waited beneath

with uplifted oars. She pushed off, displaying a broad pendant from her bow, and pulled towards the Independence, which kept under rapid way, so as to make it difficult for the boat to overtake her. The individual of distinguished mien could be no other than Decatur. With an admiration excited by recollections of the burning of the Philadelphia, the hand to hand encounter in the gunboats, the capture of the Macedonian, the desperate defence against the attack of the British squadron, which ended in the capture of the President, and of the more recent triumphs from which Decatur had just arrived, the writer followed him, until he disappeared through the gangway of the Independence, with an intense and overpowering interest, and with a thrill of patriotic pride in his boyish heart, still freshly remembered, and almost felt.

Bainbridge proceeded out of the straits with his squadron, and Decatur, on reaching the Guerriere, brought her to anchor in Gibraltar. Having devoted a few hours to obtaining necessary supplies for his ship, and allowed Commander Downes to exchange with Lieutenant Commanding George W. Rodgers,* of the Ontario, who now came on board the Guerriere as captain, at their joint request, he weighed anchor at eight o'clock in the evening of

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* Mr. Rodgers had been first lieutenant with Captain Jacob Jones in the Wasp, when she took the Frolic, and accompanied him to the Macedonian, where he was much under the eye of Decatur, and became a great favorite with him.

the same day, being the 7th of October, and took advantage of the Levanter, which was then blowing, to get out of the Mediterranean. He arrived at New York in company with the brig Enterprise, on the 12th of November, having been less than six months absent from that port. Commodore Bainbridge, meeting with more delay on account of his sailing in squadron, did not arrive at Newport until the 15th of November.

The reception of Decatur from his countrymen was but a just manifestation of their sense of the grateful admiration. In a very brief space of time, he had humbled those fierce barbarians, who had so often successfully resisted the efforts of the most powerful monarchs of Europe to subdue them, and had continued for centuries the terror and scourge of Christendom. He had first won from them an exemption for his countrymen from tribute, and from the horrors of Algerine slavery, placing them, by the celerity and daring of his acts and the terror of his name, upon a footing enjoyed by the people of no other nation. The just pride of the country was flattered, too, by the spectacle of American ships becoming an asylum for the unfortunate captives of other countries.*

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* Among the cheering greetings with which Decatur was welcomed to his home, the following characteristic one from a friend, of kindred spirit, will not be unacceptable to the reader.

"Washington, November 15th, 1815.

"DEAR SIR,

"The public prints of this morning announce your arrival. I take it for granted, therefore, this letter will find

On the termination of his successful cruise, Decatur received from Mr. Monroe, the Secretary of State, a letter concluding with the following complimentary acknowledgment; "I take much interest in informing you that the result of this expedition, so glorious to your country and honorable to yourself and the officers and men under your command, has been very satisfactory to the President." The Secretary of the Navy was equally forward to express his satisfaction and thanks, and, a vacancy at this time occurring in the board of navy commissioners by the retirement of Commodore Isaac Hull, the Secretary gladly seized the opportunity to obtain the services of Decatur in that important station. He soon commenced his journey towards Washington, everywhere greeted with the cordial attentions and admiring plaudits of his countrymen.

On the assembling of Congress, in December of 1815, President Madison commenced his an-

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you at New York. It bears with it my hearty congratulations on your safe and speedy return from your brilliant, comet-like expedition to our old friends. You have done more in a few months than all Europe has effected in ages, and have given a lesson not only to Christendom, but to the Barbary powers, that will not soon be forgotten. However, I shall refrain from expressions of admiration, lest it should seem flattery. My object is only to give you welcome to your country and to your friends, among whom permit me to rank myself. Present me respectfully to Mrs. Decatur, and believe me to be sincerely yours,

"D. PORTER."

"Commodore S. DECATUR."

nual message to that body, by the following announcement.

"I have the satisfaction, on our present meeting, of being able to communicate to you the successful termination of the war, which had been commenced against the United States by the regency of Algiers. The squadron in advance on that service, under Commodore Decatur, lost not a moment, after its arrival in the Mediterranean, in seeking the naval force of the enemy, then cruising in that sea, and succeeded in capturing two of his ships, one of them the principal ship, commanded by the Algerine Admiral. The high character of the American commander was brilliantly sustained on the occasion, who brought his own ship into close action with that of his adversary, as was the accustomed gallantry of all the officers and men actually engaged.

"Having prepared the way by this demonstration of American skill and prowess, he hastened to the port of Algiers, where peace was promptly yielded to his victorious force. In the terms stipulated, the rights and honor of the United States were particularly consulted, by a perpetual relinquishment, on the part of the Dey, of all pretensions to tribute from them. The impressions, which have thus been made, strengthened as they will have been by subsequent transactions with the regencies of Tunis and Tripoli, by the appearance of the larger force which followed under Commodore Bainbridge, the chief

in command of the expedition, and by the judicious precautionary arrangements left by him in that quarter, afford reasonable prospect of future security for the valuable portion of our commerce which passes within reach of the Barbary powers."

His journey was arrested at Baltimore to enable him to accept an elegant entertainment at the Fountain Inn, provided by the most distinguished citizens, without distinction of party. Nothing was omitted that could confer honor on the illustrious guest. After the removal of the cloth, the following toasts were given and responded to with hearty enthusiasm; "The valor we celebrate! It has illustrated the brightest page of our history; it deserves our deepest gratitude." And again, "Algiers, and the other Barbary powers! Taught by Decatur's gallant squadron to respect the laws of nations." Decatur gave, in return, the following complimentary sentiment; "The citizens of Baltimore! Their patriotism and valor defeated the veteran forces of their enemy, who came, saw, and fled." After the departure of their guest, the chairman thus complimented him by name; "Commodore Decatur! The man whom his country delights to honor."

Early in January, 1816, Decatur arrived in Washington, and entered on the duties of his responsible station. To these he devoted himself, in connection with his associates, Commodores Rodgers and Porter, with all the success which

zeal, experience, and professional ability could secure. Soon after his arrival in the capital, the Pennsylvania delegation in Congress took advantage of the joint presence of Decatur, Stewart, and Biddle, to offer an entertainment to these distinguished citizens of their state. The profession to which they belonged was thus elegantly complimented; "The navy! Led by heroism, and accompanied by humanity, it has conquered a wreath of imperishable glory." Decatur gave, "The state of Pennsylvania! Powerful and patriotic." Congress, towards the close of its session, manifested its sense of the services rendered by Decatur and his followers in the Algerine war, by appropriating the sum of one hundred thousand dollars, to indemnify them for the prizes which had been returned to Algiers.

In the succeeding month of April, professional duties called Decatur to Norfolk, the birthplace of Mrs. Decatur, where they had resided several years, and where they were welcomed by a large circle of attached friends. The gentlemen of the place eagerly took advantage of this opportunity to meet him in a general reunion round the social board. Among the appropriate sentiments, which the occasion called forth, were the following; "The Mediterranean! The sea not more of Greek and Roman, than of American glory." "The crescent! Our stars have dimmed its lustre." "National glory! A gem above all price, and worthy every hazard to sustain its splendor." De-

catur responded with a sentiment, which has since become memorable; "Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations, may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong." May it ever remain the rallying cry of patriotism throughout the land; not the least valuable of the legacies left by Decatur to his countrymen.

Not long after, Decatur having occasion to pass through Petersburg in Virginia, the moment his presence there became known, he was waited upon by a committee of the citizens, who presented him with an address, expressive of their admiration and thanks for his public services, and requesting him to partake of an entertainment, on the afternoon of the same day, at Poplar Spring. Decatur accepted the invitation, and three hundred persons assembled, on that short notice, to unite in greeting and honoring him.

Suggestions having been made to the navy department, that more suitable places than Norfolk might be found within the waters of the Chesapeake Bay for the establishment of a naval depot, the navy commissioners were ordered, in May, 1817, to examine various designated sites within the Chesapeake, and to report which they considered the most eligible for the desired object. They were also directed to report on the best mode of defending the Chesapeake, by means of stationary batteries, from a hostile fleet. After a prolonged examination, during the succeeding summer, the commissioners, not being able

to come to a unanimous opinion on the various questions submitted to them, found it necessary to make separate reports. That of Decatur is so ingenious and masterly, and shows such a perfect appreciation of the requisites of a great naval station, of the objects to be accomplished by the naval force which it would be its purpose to succor or equip, and of the means of defending it, that it has been thought due to him to place it at length in the Appendix. His suggestions have been adopted, in the permanent location of the depot, and in part, at least, in the construction of the defences.

Decatur had already exhibited himself advantageously as a military man and as a diplomatist. In the navy board he had now an opportunity of showing, that he possessed administrative talents of no ordinary character. In connection with his worthy associates, he labored successfully to direct properly the efforts to build up our naval defences, determine the classes of our ships, introduce system into the navy yards and hospitals, improve the artillery and small arms of the service, correct the expenditures, and prevent waste and peculation. Against the approaches of schemers and contractors, who sometimes endeavor, under the color of political influence, to make the public service the victim of their dishonesty, and the treasury tributary to their avarice, he set his face most determinedly. In this connection, Commodore Rodgers often related an

incident illustrative of Decatur's intense abhorrence of corruption.

One morning, he found Decatur in the office, earnestly engaged in examining a newly invented firearm, and listening with great respect and attention to the inventor's explanation. Commodore Rodgers soon after left the room, and went to one immediately over it, leaving the inventor alone with Decatur. He had scarcely got there when he heard a great commotion below him, and Decatur's voice raised in a high and angry tone. Commodore Rodgers hurried down, wondering what could have occurred, in an instant, so to excite his associate. He found the inventor on his knees before Decatur, who stood over him, commanding him to ask his pardon, and beg for his life; with which the culprit, sensible of his guilt, and cowering before the indignation it had excited in a breast with which his own sordid one had no common sympathy, was happy to comply. It appeared that, after having labored unsuccessfully to convince Decatur that his invention was an admirable one, the man had offered to share its profits with him, if he would procure its introduction in the navy.

The story, relating to one of the only two occasions in which the writer has heard of Decatur's giving way to anger, has its interest in showing what sort of impulse was required to disturb his equilibrium. It has its useful moral, too, in explaining how important it is that the

older officers should be employed, as much as possible, in the administrative duties connected with supplying the service; bringing to their posts, as they must, a deep interest in that service, a knowledge of its wants, an ascertained position, if not affluence, at least a freedom from want, and names and characters beyond the reach of sordid temptation.

In September, 1817, Decatur received a new evidence of the grateful admiration of the citizens of Baltimore, in the gift of a complete dinner service of silver, of costly workmanship. Each piece bore the following simple and appropriate inscription; "The citizens of Baltimore to Commodore Stephen Decatur; *Rebus gestis insigni, ob Virtutes dilecto;* Renowned for his Actions, beloved for his Virtues." Who could desire to merit a more comprehensive eulogium?

This munificent gift was accompanied by the following gratifying letter from Messrs. Richard Caton, John McKim, and John Hoffman.

"Dear Sir; On the part of a number of our fellow-citizens, we request you to accept a service of plate, of Baltimore workmanship, which we have the pleasure of transmitting to you with this letter. It is intended by the contributors as a testimonial of their respect for your private virtues, and gratitude for your distinguished public services; more especially those rendered in the late war with Algiers, which, by a singular union

of vigor and skill in your measures, and of prudence and magnanimity in your conduct, was brought to a termination in the highest degree useful and glorious to your country. In expressing to you, on the part of the contributors, these sentiments, in which we fully participate, we perform a duty enjoined on us by them, and highly gratifying to ourselves."

Decatur replied as follows. "Gentlemen ; I have been honored with your communication of the 29th of September, accompanied by the splendid service of plate, which a number of the citizens of Baltimore have done me the honor to present to me. I beg you to assure them, that I have a full sense of this generous testimony of their esteem and partiality. I will not deny to you the high gratification I have derived from the marked approbation they have been pleased to express of my conduct. My object, through a service of nearly twenty years, has been to merit the good opinion of my countrymen ; and the evidence, which you have furnished me of the success of my exertions, leaves me little else to desire. I beg you, Gentlemen, for yourselves, to accept my warmest thanks for the gratifying manner, in which you have been pleased to make known to me the favorable sentiments of the citizens of Baltimore, rendered the more acceptable from the gracious manner in which they have been communicated."

In February, 1818, a similar testimonial was offered to him by the citizens of Philadelphia, ren-

dered peculiarly acceptable and touching to his feelings, as coming from the friends and companions of his youth. The gift was accompanied by the following letter.

"Dear Sir; a number of your townsmen, most of whom have known you from your youth, and the hearts of all of whom have followed you in your career of peril, honor, and usefulness, with alternate anxiety and exultation, have appointed the undersigned a committee to present you with a service of plate, in testimony of their high sense of your brilliant service to your country, and of the glory which your deeds have reflected on her name. In executing this pleasing duty, we beg you to be assured, that, although the tribute which we now offer is intrinsically of no great value, it is accompanied by the love and gratitude of your countrymen."

This letter was signed by Messrs. Robert Wharton, Daniel Smith, Robert Smith, Jonathan Smith, and Samuel Relf. Decatur thus replied, evidently with a full heart. "Gentlemen; I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, with the elegant service of plate presented to me by a number of my fellow-citizens of Philadelphia. Any language, that I could use, would fall very far short of doing justice to the grateful feelings and recollections, with which your communication has filled me. It has added another to the many proofs I had already received of the partiality of my townsmen and the friends of my youth. I beg your

committee, composed of names with which my earliest and most agreeable ideas are associated, to accept my warmest thanks for the very flattering sentiments you have expressed towards me, and my best wishes for a continuation of your prosperity."*

With only such pleasant interruptions as these to the ordinary routine of his daily avocations and amusements, the life of Decatur passed on tranquilly and happily, with no annoyance to mar the present, and no cloud to give omen of future disturbance. His mornings were assiduously devoted to the fulfilment of his important duties as navy commissioner. His leisure was given to the enjoyment of what was best in the society of Washington, uniting the highest in the country for station, character, and intelligence, with distinguished representations of other lands, and especially of the endearments of a home rendered attractive by the presiding influence of an accomplished, intellectual, and devoted wife.

Soon after his arrival in Washington, he had

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* It may be well to enumerate here the various testimonials of approbation and gratitude received by Decatur from his country. A sword from Congress, for burning the Philadelphia; another from Congress, for the attacks on Tripoli; a medal from Congress, for the capture of the Macedonian; a box containing the freedom of New York, for the same service; the medal of the order of Cincinnati, for the same; swords from Pennsylvania, the city of Philadelphia, and from Virginia, for the same; services of plate from Baltimore and Philadelphia, for closing the Algerine war.

bought a house, one of those known as the Seven Buildings. He subsequently purchased a vacant lot on the President's Square, immediately opposite the navy department, in which was the office of the navy commissioners, and erected on it an elegant and commodious mansion, which continued ever afterwards to be his home. He had no children; but the void thus left in his affections was filled by the children of his sister, Mrs. McKnight, whom he cherished with truly paternal love. Obedience to a code, for which public opinion is responsible, had deprived them, at a very tender age, of a father's care, and was soon to be fatal to their new protector.*

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* Another member of this family, Lieutenant Stephen Decatur McKnight, had served with distinction on board the Essex, under Commodore Porter, during the whole of that daring cruise which terminated in her capture at Valparaiso, by two British ships. He and Midshipman Lyman were left on board the Essex, to accompany her to Rio de Janeiro, to give the necessary testimony for her adjudication in the prize court. At Rio they embarked on board a Swedish brig bound to England, as the readiest way that offered of reaching home. On the passage, they fell in with the United States ship Wasp, Commodore Blakeley, and, having already been exchanged at Valparaiso, they gladly availed themselves of the opportunity of resuming their career of duty on board a ship, which had already, since she left the United States, captured two British sloops of her own rate.

But the strange coincidence, which thus, in mid ocean, had so unexpectedly restored them to their country's service, and a near prospect of return to their homes, was doomed to have a melancholy result. The ship was never heard of more. The

CHAPTER XV.

Decatur acts as Friend of Perry. — Perry sails for the Oronoco. — Origin of the Difficulty between Decatur and Commodore Barron. — Narrative of the Particulars relating to that Difficulty. — Commodore Barron challenges Decatur. — Contemporary Opinion of the Causes of that Transaction. — Terms of Meeting. — Decatur's Determination not to take Life. — Mortally wounded. — His Death.

Absorbing as were the duties of Decatur, attractive as was his home, and however little he was disposed to leave it, his time and services were ever at the command of his friends. In Commodore O. H. Perry he possessed a very dear one, closely bound to him by similarity of feelings, character, and deeds. This friend had become involved in a painful difficulty. A brother officer, Captain John Heath, of the marines, had

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friends of McKnight and Lyman could trace them no further, than to the period of their departure from Rio. Months and years of anxious uncertainty, scarcely relieved by a ray of hope, passed on, when inquiries in Sweden resulted in the discovery of the fact, that the young men had been received on board of the Wasp at sea, and had shared a fate, concerning which there has been much conjecture, but of which nothing more is certainly known, than that she must have perished. Commodore Downes, who was first lieutenant of the Essex, says of Stephen Decatur McKnight, what in itself is a comprehensive eulogium, "He promised to do honor to the name he bore."

called upon him for personal satisfaction. Perry applied to Decatur to act as his friend. Decatur repaired to the neighborhood of New York, where the meeting took place, on the 10th of October, 1818. Perry received the fire of Captain Heath without returning it, after which Decatur stepped forward, and declared that Commodore Perry had come to the ground with the determination not to return his adversary's fire, in proof of which, he read a letter addressed to him, by Perry, nearly a year before the meeting, in which he had announced this determination. He stated that he presumed the aggrieved party was now satisfied, which was admitted; and Decatur had the satisfaction of thus terminating the difficulty, without loss of life.

Soon after, Perry was ordered to proceed on an important and hazardous service, to the fatal climate of the Oronoco. He went to Washington to receive his orders from the navy and state departments, under both of which he was to act. There he enjoyed, for a brief season, the hospitality and affectionate social intercourse of Decatur, ere they took a final leave of each other. Perry departed, and taking the fatal malady of the Oronoco, soon after died.* Scarcely had these

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* A friend, in announcing to Decatur his bereavement, thus eulogizes his departed friend; "Poor Perry! had he fallen in battle, the halo of glory, which would surely have surrounded his brow, might have afforded some consolation to his afflicted family and friends, and would have tempered the blow his

worthy friends separated, when Decatur was himself involved in a difficulty, which would doubtless have impelled him to ask, in turn, the aid of Perry, had he been at hand; and this aid might possibly have availed to prevent a fatal issue to a difference, which, as it was altogether professional in its origin, was entirely susceptible of accommodation.

The circumstances of the attack of the Leopard on the Chesapeake, and of Decatur's connection with the ensuing trial of Commodore Barron, have been alluded to in their proper place, as briefly as their bearing on Decatur's subsequent history would allow. It has been stated, that, by the sentence of that court, Commodore Barron was suspended from duty for five years, from the 8th day of February, 1808. Being also deprived of his pay by the same sentence, he resorted to the merchant service, as a means of support. He

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country must now feel in being bereft of one of her bravest and brightest ornaments. You will feel his loss, I know, as a brother and very dear friend, who was attached to you more sincerely, I believe, than any other man in the service, and for whom you could but reciprocate equal regard. I hailed with pleasure the occasion, which last called him into active command, and looked forward to his actions with confident assurance, that they would furnish a perfect model of what an American naval officer ought to be. But he is gone; and whom have you to succeed him? None, I fear, who unites so much experience with so few years; so much skill with so much gallantry; or such conciliation of manners with such firmness of purpose."

was abroad when war was declared. His suspension terminated about eight months afterwards; some months after which he reported himself to the navy department for duty by letter. The war continued about two years after he had become available for a command.

He returned to the United States at the close of 1818. Soon after, a memorial in his favor was presented to the President by a portion of the Virginia delegation in Congress. It was said in a newspaper of the day, that a claim had been instituted for his appointment to the ship of the line Columbus, which was in process of equipment in the spring of 1819, as the flagship of our squadron in the Mediterranean, and that this claim was resisted by all the navy commissioners, and especially by Decatur. Whether this was the case or not, it is at least evident, from the tenor of his subsequent correspondence with Commodore Barron, that Decatur took an active part, by the expression of his opinion, in preventing that officer's restoration to active service. That Decatur was influenced in this course by "feelings of public duty" alone, with an entire absence of "personal enmity," he distinctly avowed; nor can it be reasonably doubted.

The purport of what he said, as subsequently stated to Commodore Barron, was, "I have entertained, and do still entertain, the opinion, that your conduct as an officer, since the affair of the Chesapeake," (alluding to his absence during the

war,) "has been such as ought to forever bar your readmission into the service;" and again, "that there was not employment for all the officers, who had faithfully discharged their duty to their country in the hour of trial; and that it would be doing an act of injustice to employ you, to the exclusion of any one of them." To show that Decatur was not alone, either in entertaining or expressing these opinions, it is due to him to cite evidence from his own letters. "I think I am not mistaken, when I inform you, that all the officers of your grade, your superiors as well as inferiors, with the exception of one, who is your junior, concur in the opinion that you ought not to be employed again, whilst the imputations which now lie against you remain; nor have they been less backward than myself in expressing their opinions."

It may be seen, from the above, what were the opinions which Decatur entertained and expressed, with regard to Commodore Barron's readmission into active service, and that he did not entertain and express them alone. What possible motive could Decatur have had, other than the "feelings of public duty," which he assigned, for thus opposing Commodore Barron's claims? If rivalry for the distinction of a command, where there were so many candidates and so little employment, made it desirable to throw even one candidate out of the contest, surely Decatur was as little likely as any of his grade to be moved by

such a consideration. His opportunities for distinction, and the manner in which he had improved them, had been so preëminent, as to dispose the government to gratify, and even to anticipate, any wish he might form. If, when he returned after the loss of the President, the Secretary of the Navy, writing unofficially, could say to him, "Your wishes are to be consulted; any service, or any station, that is at the disposal of this department, rely upon it, you can command," surely the brilliant success of his recent cruise to the Mediterranean must have raised him still higher above the necessity or suspicion of rivalry.

Yet these remarks of Decatur, suggested neither by personal enmity nor unworthy rivalry, the mere expression of an opinion on a professional point, susceptible of being either enforced or set aside by the test of evidence and reason, some individual, ingenious in fomenting quarrels for others, contrived to make the occasion of personal difficulty between Commodore Decatur and Commodore Barron. It was erelong intimated to Decatur, by a friend who had observed what was preparing for his molestation, that he was likely to receive a hostile call from Commodore Barron. He then stated, if such a call was made, he would meet it, though he should be better pleased if it were not made. How broad was the invention of the informer, who whispered his malicious imaginings into the ear of Commodore Barron, will appear

from the following demand, which Commodore Barron addressed to Commodore Decatur on the 12th of June, 1819. "I have been informed in Norfolk, that you have said you could insult me with impunity, or words to that effect. If you have said so, you will no doubt avow it, and I shall expect to hear from you." *

Decatur replied, on the 17th of the same month, with a letter containing the following explicit disavowal of the offensive expression attributed to him; "I feel a thorough conviction, that I never could have been guilty of so much egotism as to say, that I could insult you (or any other man) with impunity."

Two other letters followed, explanatory of the first, and the correspondence ended for the time without involving Decatur in a personal quarrel. He considered it at an end; and the apprehensions of his friends were relieved from all anxiety on his account at the prospect of an encounter, which he was desirous to avoid, and from which he could derive no glory.

Had Commodore Barron been left to himself, had there been no extraneous influences, no intermeddling, he might well have confided in his own

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* This correspondence will be only so far referred to in the text, as may be indispensable to carry on the narrative, and give a connected statement of the main points in dispute. But it will be given entire in the Appendix, that every reader may form an unbiased opinion for himself. As it advanced, it naturally increased in irritation.

sense of Decatur's magnanimity, derived from long association with him on shipboard. However much he might have regretted the convictions, which public considerations had impressed on Decatur's mind, though he might have been unwilling to acquiesce in them, and sought, by appeal to superior authority and the duly constituted tribunals of his profession, to relieve himself from the disqualification, which these convictions tended to impose, he yet might not have found in Decatur's course any motive for that personal enmity towards Decatur, which the latter solemnly disavowed towards him. But a baneful influence was at work, kindling the spirit of discontent within the breast of Commodore Barron. Believing himself the subject of too rigorous a punishment for the occurrences on board the Chesapeake, and of unjust exclusion from the honors of his profession, on account of the absence which had first grown out of those occurrences, the poison of this baneful influence, in the condition of his mind, converted his own past misfortunes into the present crime of Decatur.

No cause for a duel existed. Another fabrication, probably from the same ready source with that which had given occasion to the first demand, was conveyed to Commodore Barron, and became the occasion of a new one. On the 23d of October, nearly four months after the close of the first correspondence, Commodore Barron again addressed Decatur in a letter, of which the material ground

of complaint is contained in the following extract. "I addressed a letter to you under date of the 12th of June last, which produced a correspondence between us, which I have since been informed you have endeavored to use to my further injury, by sending it to Norfolk by a respectable officer of the navy, to be shown to some of my particular friends, with a view of alienating from me their attachment. I am also informed, that you have tauntingly and boastingly observed that you would cheerfully meet me in the field, and hoped I would yet act like a man, or words to that effect. Such conduct, Sir, on the part of any one, but especially one occupying the influential station under the government which you hold, towards an individual situated as I am, and oppressed as I have been, and that chiefly by your means, is unbecoming you as an officer and a gentleman, and shows a want of the magnanimity, which, hostile as I have found you to be towards me, I had hoped, for your own reputation, you possessed. It calls loudly for redress at your hands."

Assuming Decatur to have really made the offensive remarks last imputed to him, Commodore Barron proceeded to draw the following inference. "I consider you as having given the invitation, which I accept, and will prepare to meet you at such time and place as our respective friends, hereafter to be named, shall designate. I also, under all the circumstances of the case, consider myself entitled to the choice of weapons, place, and dis-

tance; but should a difference of opinion be entertained by our friends, I flatter myself, from your known personal courage, that you would disdain any unfair advantage, which your superiority in the use of the pistol, and the natural defect in my vision, increased by age, would give you."

Decatur replied to Commodore Barron's last letter on the 31st of October, and, being desirous to set himself right, whatever might occur, he made an elaborate statement of the opinions which he entertained and had expressed with regard to Commodore Barron, and the reasons on which those opinions were founded. In commencing this statement, he took occasion to say, "Between you and myself there never has been a personal difference;" and again he adds, in the same spirit, "I have judged it expedient, at this time, to state, as distinctly as may be in my power, the facts upon which I ground the unfavorable opinion, which I entertain and have expressed of your conduct as an officer, since the court-martial upon you, while I disclaim all personal enmity towards you."

Having set forth these facts in confirmation of his opinion, which has been already quoted, as imbodying the expressions he made use of previously to the demand first made upon him by Commodore Barron, he next adverted to the special object of Commodore Barron's last letter. "You profess to consider me as having given you 'an invitation.' You say that you have been told, that I have 'tauntingly and boastingly observed that I

would cheerfully meet you in the field, and hoped you would yet act like a man.' One would naturally have supposed, that, after having been so recently led into error by 'rumors which could not be traced,' you would have received with some caution subsequent rumors; at all events, that you would have endeavored to trace them, before again venturing to act upon them as if they were true. Had you pursued this course, you would have discovered, that the latter rumors were equally unfounded as the former."

After an interval of another month, Commodore Barron rejoined, on the 30th of November, in an elaborate reply to Decatur's statement of opinions, and the facts on which they were founded. With regard to the main point in question, Commodore Barron's continued absence from the country during the war, he thus declined stating the paramount and controlling reason, which had prevented his return. "I should have returned, Sir, but for circumstances beyond my control, which it is not incumbent on me to explain to *you*." This is now known to have referred to Commodore Barron's want of pecuniary means; and it may well be regretted that he had not communicated, with the inferior reasons that made his return difficult, the controlling reason which he considered to have rendered it impossible. It was again insisted by Commodore Barron that Decatur had challenged him, and he expressed his readiness to accept the invitation.

The absence of Decatur from Washington, on a tour of duty to the northern naval stations, prevented him from replying to Commodore Barron's last letter until the 29th of December, when he again denied emphatically, that he had either challenged Commodore Barron, or intended to do so. "Not believing," he said, "that a fight of this nature will raise me at all in public estimation, but may even have a contrary effect, I do not feel at all disposed to remove the difficulties that lie in our way. If we fight, it must be of your seeking; and you must take all the risk and all the inconvenience, which usually attend the challenger in such cases."

On the 16th of January, 1820, Commodore Barron wrote again to say, that, whenever Decatur would consent to meet him on fair and equal terms, he was at liberty to consider the letter he then wrote as a challenge. Decatur replied, naming Commodore Bainbridge as his friend, and referring to him as fully authorized to make whatever arrangements he pleased as to the terms of their meeting.

A letter of this period to Decatur throws much light on a secret agency, which, not unsuspected by himself, had revived and fostered this difficulty until it had reached its present state of irritation. It shows also that Decatur was forewarned, by his friends, how nearly it concerned him, and how entirely it was due to himself, "to yield not the smallest particle of any right or

privilege, which circumstances might give him." It will be seen, in the sequel, how generously he disregarded this warning of his friends, and abandoned his own announced intention to throw on the party seeking the meeting "all the risk and all the inconvenience, which usually attend the challenger."

The names in the extract from the letter are left in blank. They are not written out in the letter itself. They are believed to attach no odium to any living person; and no generous purpose would be accomplished by lending any aid to conjecture in heaping infamy on the dead. "But one opinion exists with all the naval officers here, upon the subject which has so mentioned to them. It is the same with yours. That is the sole instigator of the renewal of the correspondence, and will prevent any sort of adjustment if he can do so. called on me the moment I got home. He wished to know if I had heard anything in the city on the subject. I told him I had not, and he then gave me the information I have stated above, which has since confirmed. In our conversation stated that from a conversation he had with last fall, he had expected to receive an application from you, which he was prepared most willingly to have assented to, and that he had so told , with permission to mention it to you; that, knowing as he did, and thinking of his conduct, in relation to this mat-

ter, as he felt himself authorized to do, he had long since made up his mind as to the course he would adopt if called on by you. It was this; to advise and insist most strenuously, that you should yield not the smallest particle of any right or privilege, which circumstances might give you."

The solicitude of Decatur's friends was by this time intensely excited to see him extricated from this painful difficulty. Commodore Bainbridge, being at Washington, engaged in equipping the Columbus, had become Decatur's friend. As the ship advanced in her preparations, she was removed to St. Mary's, in the Potomac, for deeper water. There Decatur addressed a letter to Commodore Bainbridge, leaving to him the sole adjustment of the terms of meeting, without imparting the views of his anxious friends, or suggesting a wish of his own, except as to the place of meeting, which he was desirous should be near his own home. And there, on the 8th of March, 1820, Commodore Bainbridge was visited, on board the Columbus, by Captain Jesse D. Elliott, as the friend of Commodore Barron, for the purpose of making final arrangements for the meeting.

It may be remembered, that the day on which this agreement was signed was, by a melancholy coincidence, the anniversary of Decatur's marriage. On this return of that day, they, whose union it had seen consecrated, looking back

through the vista of fourteen years, which they had lived happily together, passed the evening in gayety, at the weekly drawing-room of the Presidential mansion.

The following were the terms agreed on. "It is agreed by the undersigned, as friends of Commodore Decatur and Commodore Barron, that the meeting, which is to take place between the said Commodore Decatur and Commodore Barron, shall take place at nine, A. M., on the 22d instant, at Bladensburg, near the District of Columbia, and that the weapons shall be pistols; the distance, eight paces or yards; that, previously to firing, the parties shall be directed to present, and shall not fire before the word 'one' is given, or after the word 'three;' that the words, one, two, three, shall be given by Commodore Bainbridge."

The distance fixed, in the above agreement, for the approaching encounter, the shortest that is customary, is precisely what would have been selected in the interest of Commodore Barron, who had sought the meeting, and whose vision was defective. This involved a complete departure from the advice so urgently given by his anxious friends, "not to yield the smallest particle of any right or privilege, which circumstances might give him," and from Decatur's own announced intention, whilst the question whether there was to be a meeting at all was pending, "If we fight, it must be of your seeking; and you must take all the risk and all the inconvenience, which usually attend the challenger in such cases." But these views of his

friends Decatur had abstained from communicating to Commodore Bainbridge; and from the same magnanimity he had abandoned his own announced intention to throw "all the risk" on the challenger.

On receiving the challenge, Decatur had communicated it to Commodore Rodgers, whom he is said to have assured that nothing could induce him to take the life of Commodore Barron, at the same time that he had no desire to lose his own. With these merciful intentions on the part of Decatur, it is evident that, in the interest of humanity, the greatest customary distance should have been chosen, instead of the least. When terms so little favorable to his own safety, having in view his determination not to take life, of which Commodore Bainbridge, being at a distance, had probably been left in ignorance, had been agreed on, and communicated to his associates in the navy board, Commodores Rodgers and Porter, they both earnestly advised him, as was afterwards made known to his bereaved widow, not to agree to them. "He said it was then too late to make objections. If other terms had been fixed, it was his determination not to have returned the fire; but now, all he could do would be to wound him in a part not vital. It was remarked to him, that he might sacrifice his own life. He replied, that he could not help it; he would rather lose his own life, than take the life of a fellow-creature against whom he had no ill will." He mentioned to the commissioners that he would wound his adversary

in the hip. How completely his merciful intentions were preserved, how entirely he was master of his weapon and of himself, will be seen in the sequel. He would have been equally so at the greatest distance as at the least, and his name might still have remained the strength, ornament, and glory of his country.

For what is painful in these preliminaries, the detail has already been too long; but not for what is due to the memory of Decatur; to exhibit the circumstances under which he engaged in this encounter, into which he entered at last free from malice, with the determination to expose his own life, but not take that of his adversary.

Mindful of the interests and comfort of Mrs. Decatur, he used the pretext of the length of time he had been on shore, and the probability of his soon being sent to sea, to impart to her his views with regard to the management of his property. With the same thoughtful consideration, a few days before that fixed for the meeting, he wrote to Mrs. Decatur's father, asking him to come to Washington, as he had a painful transaction before him, which might terminate fatally, in which event he wished him to be with his daughter. He also requested General Robert G. Harper, who was then residing temporarily in his house, to bring Mrs. Harper, who was a friend of Mrs. Decatur, to Washington, to be with her in the same possible contingency.

In anticipation also of the meeting, he requested

Dr. Bailey Washington, of the navy, to accompany him to the ground. Dr. Washington, being engaged in private practice, hesitated to connect himself with a transaction of the sort; but on Decatur's remarking, that he wished his attendance not only for himself, in case of his being wounded, but also for Commodore Barron, should he receive injury, Dr. Washington consented to be in the neighborhood of the place of meeting, in readiness to render his services. He subsequently informed Decatur, that Dr. Trevitt, his former surgeon in the President, was in town. This gentleman agreed to be present.

On the morning of the 22d of March, 1820, Decatur rose at an early hour. With what ingenious pretext, suggested by affection, he lulled the partner of his bosom to security, at what cost of suppressed emotion he wore a cheerful aspect, whilst thus taking what might be a last look of her, who was dearer to him than all else in the world, may be faintly conceived. He traversed the President's Square, at the western corner of which stood his residence, won in the cause of his country, embellished by many and munificent testimonials of that country's gratitude, enriched beyond all else for him by the presence of his most cherished trophy, her whom he had loved and won.

Entering the Pennsylvania Avenue, he walked to its eastern extremity, and reached Beale's Hotel, on the Capitol Hill, where Commodore Bain-

bridge and Mr. Samuel Hambleton, of the navy, were waiting to receive him. They then sat down to breakfast. Decatur partook of it in cheerfulness, but did not affect indifference to the occasion, which had called them together. He mentioned that he had a paper with him, meaning his will, which he wished to sign; but as it required three witnesses, and suspicion might be awakened by calling in any person for the purpose, he said that he would defer signing it until he reached the ground. He spoke of Commodore Barron without ill will, and declared that he should be very sorry to take his life. He adverted also to the inducements he himself had to desire the continuance of his own.

Breakfast being over, and the proper time arrived to set out in order to reach Bladensburg by nine o'clock, they entered their carriage, and drove in that direction. On reaching a valley, within a half mile of the village, Captain Elliott was observed standing in the road, on the brow of a hill. He went back to seek Commodore Barron, and soon after returned with him. The ground was measured by Commodore Bainbridge, and the seconds proceeded to load. Commodore Bainbridge won the choice of stands, and his friend took the lowest, probably as most favorable to his purpose of striking his adversary below a vital part. On taking their stands, Commodore Bainbridge informed them that he would give the word quickly, "Present! one, two, three;" and

they were not to fire before the word "one," nor after the word "three." Commodore Barron asked Commodore Bainbridge if he had any objection to pronouncing the words as he intended to give them. He replied that he had not, and did so.

At this conjuncture, Commodore Barron observed to Commodore Decatur, "that he hoped, on meeting in another world, they would be better friends than they had been in this." Commodore Decatur replied, "I have never been your enemy, Sir." Why, then, were they about to aim at each other? Why could not this aspiration for peace between them in the next world, on one part, and this comprehensive disclaimer of all enmity on the other, have been seized by the friends for the purpose of reconciliation? Commodore Barron is said to have since avowed, that he made this remark with a view to reconciliation; the reply of Decatur was also conciliatory; and the tone and manner of both are said by an eye-witness to have accorded with their words. Might it not with great propriety have been suggested, that, since the whole difference between them consisted in Decatur's expressing an opinion that, for public reasons assigned, Commodore Barron should not be appointed to a command, and thus resolved itself into a question of naval discipline, that question, and the sufficiency of those reasons, should be referred to a court of inquiry, and both parties

should acquiesce in the result?* No proposal for a reconciliation was suggested. The concerted words were pronounced by Commodore Bainbridge. At the word "two," both fired so exactly together, that only one report was heard. Commodore Barron fell, wounded in the right hip, according to the announced intention of Decatur.

It was rumored, at the time, that Decatur, although he had at first determined not to take the life of Commodore Barron in the approaching conflict, when he heard the terms on which it was to take place, then said "he would kill him." This rumor is at variance with his declaration to Commodores Rodgers and Porter, naming where he would wound him, also rumored at the time; at variance with his solicitude, expressed to Dr.

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* This question was so referred at last, after the arbitrament of the pistol had been fatally invoked, and the verdict of the trial by battle revised by the test of evidence and reason. In the following year, Commodore Barron sought active employment. He was informed, that, as a prerequisite to a compliance with his wishes, an investigation of his conduct from the year 1807 would be necessary, and that, whilst the government was not disposed to order a court for such investigation, a demand to that effect from him would meet with immediate attention. It was so demanded, and ordered accordingly. It convened in New York, on the 10th of May, 1821, Commodore Charles Stewart being president, Captains Samuel Evans and Charles Morris members, and Henry Wheaton judge advocate, and pronounced, on the 14th of July, 1821, the following opinion.

"The court is of opinion, that the conversation, alleged to

Washington, to have a surgeon present, not only for himself, but for Commodore Barron; at variance with his declaration to Commodore Bainbridge and Mr. Hambleton immediately before the conflict; at variance with the fact of his not having inflicted a death wound, when his coolness and perfect precision were sufficiently notorious to be the subject of pointed allusion in the correspondence.

Decatur stood for a moment erect, but was observed by Dr. Trevitt, as subsequently communicated to Dr. Washington, to press his hand to his right side. He then fell, the ball having passed through the abdomen. He remarked, "I am mortally wounded, at least I believe so, and wish that I had fallen in defence of my country." He was raised, and supported a short distance, when he sank down, exhausted, near to where Commodore Barron lay. The latter "declared that everything had been conducted in the most honorable manner,

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have taken place between Captain James Barron and Mr. Lyon, the British Consul at Pernambuco, in the year 1809, has not been proved.

"And the court is further of opinion, that, although the evidence produced by Captain Barron establishes his sincere and earnest desire to return to the United States at certain periods, and the difficulty of accomplishing his wishes, yet the court is of opinion, that the evidence of his inability to return sooner than he actually did, is not satisfactory; and it is, therefore, the opinion of the court, that his absence from the United States, without the permission of the government, was contrary to his duty as an officer in the navy of the United States."

and told Commodore Decatur, that he forgave him from the bottom of his heart." *

A number of Decatur's friends, who were informed of the intended meeting, and whose solicitude for his safety had induced them to repair to the vicinity of the designated place, had come forward after the discharge of the pistols to behold his lamentable fate. Among them were his fellow-commissioners, Commodores Rodgers and Porter, General Robert G. Harper, who had left Mrs. Harper in the neighboring hotel, on the way to join Mrs. Decatur, Commodore W. C. Bolton, and Dr. Bailey Washington. It was soon evident to Dr. Washington and Dr. Trevitt, that Decatur's wound was mortal. Some large blood-vessels appeared to be severed, as no pulsation could be felt. Commodore Rodgers and Dr. Trevitt assisted him to enter the carriage, which had conveyed him to the ground. Seated beside him, and sustaining

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* The above is chiefly derived from the statement of Mr. Hambleton, which will be found in the Appendix. That gentleman soon left the ground to bring Commodore Decatur's carriage. There is reason to believe, that, in the interval of his absence, a conversation was begun between the parties, as they lay wounded near each other, having reference to the cause of conflict, the remarks Decatur had made about Commodore Barron's not returning home, and the obstacle to his doing so. Not possessing the *whole* of this conversation in an authentic form, and the fact of its having occurred being unknown to persons interested in learning all that had passed, the writer has abstained from attempting to give what, if properly authenticated, he feels persuaded would be creditable to the parties, and soothing to the feelings of the humane.

him, Commodore Rodgers had him borne rapidly to his home, where he arrived at half past ten o'clock.

Before he would allow himself to be taken into the house, he sent in to have Mrs. Decatur and two nieces, who composed his family, removed to the upper part of the house. They were still lingering over the breakfast table when this appalling summons arrived. The agony that it awakened there, who shall venture to conceive, or even in imagination intrude on sorrows which time may have softened, but death alone can efface? He gave positive directions that Mrs. Decatur should not see him; these were subsequently reiterated. He had too often faced death to be awed by its terrors; but he could not, he said, bear to give her so much pain as his condition must awaken, or to see her endure it.

His door was quickly surrounded by a throng of anxious friends, regardless of every thing but their overpowering interest in his fate. In reply to the eager inquiry of one of them if he was much injured, he answered, "I am a dying man." When he had been placed on a bed, the surgeons proposed to extract the ball. He asked if its removal was important, and, being told that it was not, said that it might as well remain, as it had already done all the injury it could. He remarked, that he had not believed it possible for a person to endure so much pain. Yet the intense agony, which could suggest such an expression, was pow-

erless to draw from him a groan. His room being much crowded by his anxious friends, he thanked them for their kindness and solicitude, and said, that a little rest was all that he required, as he was very much exhausted.

When most of his friends had withdrawn, he took his will from his pocket and signed it. Commodore Rodgers, Dr. Trevitt, and Dr. Sim, signed it as witnesses. It bequeathed all his property to Mrs. Decatur. Having accomplished this duty, he again remarked, that he was a dying man; that he did not so much regret his death itself, as he deplored the manner of it; had it found him on the quarter-deck, it would have been welcome. He held out his hand to Mr. Wheeler, and told him, "You can do me no service; go to my wife, and do what you can to console her."

If it be any alleviation of private grief to know, that it is widely and deeply shared, such alleviation belonged to the present calamitous occasion. When the disastrous condition of Decatur became known, the whole capital was struck with horror. Business and pleasure were alike suspended, from the President's mansion, where a drawing-room was to have been held that evening, to the tenement of the humblest patriot. The excitement and grief are represented to have been without a parallel. Unable to remain at home to receive intelligence, hoping for better tidings of the safety of the country's favorite hero, yet dreading the worst, the people of Washington thronged the ap-

proaches to his house, until it became known at half past ten o'clock at night, that he had ceased to breathe, after hours of intense bodily agony, over which his spirit had triumphed, as it was wont.

A few minutes later, the sad tidings were announced to the country by a postscript to the National Intelligencer, in the following mournful expressions. "A hero has fallen. Commodore Stephen Decatur, one of the first officers of our navy, the pride of his country, the gallant and noble-hearted gentleman, is no more. He expired a few minutes ago, of the mortal wound received in the duel this morning. Mourn, Columbia! for one of thy brightest stars is set! A son without fear and without reproach, in the fulness of his fame, in the prime of his usefulness, has descended into the tomb!" In a subsequent number, that paper added, "Not only as a hero is he lamented. With those who personally knew him, his civic qualities riveted anew the ties by which his military virtues had bound him to their hearts. He was amongst the foremost of those, who have added to the fame of his country; and his premature death is mourned as it ought to be."

One of Commodore Decatur's nieces, who was a member of his family at the time of his death, states that the gloom, which it occasioned in Washington, was confined to no particular class. "The grief of the neighboring poor was as loud and earnest as that of the magnates of the land;

some crying out, 'I have lost my best friend;' some, 'He sent me my wood;' others, 'He sent me my groceries.' In and around the house, crowds of the poor were thus bewailing their loss; bringing to light acts of charity, that even his own family had known nothing of until then." Many receipts were subsequently found among his papers for rent, and other bills, which he had paid for the indigent.

When the House of Representatives assembled the following morning, John Randolph, of Roanoke, rose, and, after some eloquent remarks expressive of the grief by which he was oppressed at the recent calamitous death of Commodore Decatur, moved, that when the House adjourn, it should do so to meet again on Saturday; that it should attend the funeral of Commodore Decatur on Friday; and that its members should wear crape on the left arm for the remainder of the session, in testimony of their respect for the illustrious memory of the deceased. Mr. Taylor, of New York, opposed this motion, feeling it, at the same time, as he remarked, due to himself to state, that, in respect for the memory and public services of the deceased, he yielded to no member of the House. But it was with the most painful regret he felt constrained to say, that he died in violation of the laws of God and of his country. He could not therefore consent, however deeply his loss was deplored by the House, in common with the whole nation, to vote the

distinguished and unusual honors, which had been proposed. The motion was withdrawn.

It was then that the admirers of Decatur might have felt how deplorable was his end, by contrasting the reception given to a resolution in his honor, by an avowed admirer, with the enthusiastic eagerness which all had evinced on other occasions to award to him the well earned meed of a grateful country, and with the homage of sorrowing, yet exulting hearts, that would have been his, had he fallen in the service of his country.* It was true, that he had died in violation of the laws of God and of his country. And yet was there not another law, lower than the law of God, yet higher than the law of his country, whose stern mandate he had obeyed? Was there no constraining law of public opinion, which may be justly held responsible for this tragedy?

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* Among the latest of Decatur's words, he lamented, as we have seen, the manner of his death, and wished that he had fallen on the quarter-deck. How must he have coveted the fate of Lawrence, his companion in the Intrepid; of his favorite Allen; of his schoolmate and friend, Somers; of James Decatur, the brother whom he had so signally avenged; of Babbit, Hamilton, and Howell, who perished by his side! Of the cause in which they fell, it might be said,

"Duty on valor stamps a true renown."

Allowance being made for difference of creed, the words in which Electra laments the fate of Agamemnon very truly express the feelings, with which the American people must have compared Decatur's lamentable end with what it would have

If, however, Congress would not, in its public senatorial character, sanction the death by which Decatur had died, its members could not be restrained, in their private character, from following him on his last earthly journey, and shedding over his grave the tear of sympathy and afflicted patriotism. On Friday, the 24th of March, which had been appointed for his funeral, Mr. Randolph again rose in the House of Representatives, and moved, "That the speaker, officers, and members of this House attend the funeral of the late Stephen Decatur, Esquire, of the United States navy, from his late residence, at four o'clock this afternoon."

A more judicious friend of Decatur's memory, Mr. Holmes, immediately rose, and said, that, apprehending that the proposition might not receive a unanimous vote; fearing to hear either yea or nay on such a question; and at the same

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been, had he fallen, as he desired, in the service of his country.

"Yet, O my father, hadst thou greatly fallen
Beneath the walls of Troy, pierced by the spear
Of some bold Lycian, leaving to thy house
Thy glory, gracing with illustrious splendor
Thy children's steps, on that barbaric coast
The high-raised tomb had dignified thy dust,
And soothed our sorrows. In the realms beneath,
Thy friendly shade, amongst the friendly shades
That fell with honor there, had held its state,
Majestic and revered, a king, next those
Whose awful power those darksome realms obey."

time wishing to give every gentleman of the House an opportunity of indulging his own inclinations on this solemn and melancholy occasion, he would move that the House do now adjourn. The motion was carried without dissent. The Senate in like manner adjourned, without one word of allusion to Decatur, but with the same motive of following his remains to the grave.

At four o'clock, the corpse of Decatur was borne from the mansion which he had last quitted in all the vigor of health, in the maturity of his powers, bodily and mental, in the prime of his usefulness and fame. The procession was preceded by the marine corps, as an escort and firing party, its band playing a mournful dirge. Then followed the seamen and officers of the navy. If ever there was a body of men, who had cause for affliction, it was the seamen of the American navy on this sad occasion.* They had lost a generous and sympathizing protector. Some mourned in him the chieftain, who had taught them the path to fame, and made them sharers of his glory; others, the messmate and friend; all,

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* At the funeral, the attention of Judge Baldwin, afterwards of the Supreme Court, was attracted by the simple and unaffected grief of a seaman, and asked him whether he had served with Decatur. He said he had not enjoyed that good fortune himself; but many, who had been his shipmates, had, and from them he had learned to know and revere Commodore Decatur. He said, "He was the friend of the flag, the sailor's friend; the navy has lost its mainmast."

the bulwark and defender of their profession, its truest hero, and therefore worthiest champion.

The clergy preceded the corpse, the pall of which was borne by Commodores Rodgers, Tingey, Chauncey, Porter, and McDonnough, (that McDonnough, who had stood side by side with Decatur in many a scene of peril,) Captains Cassin and Ballard, and Lieutenant Macpherson of the navy, and Generals Brown and Jessup of the army. After the corpse, came the relatives, and the President of the United States, with his cabinet, the members of the Senate and House of Representatives, Chief Justice Marshall and his associate Judges, the officers of the army, the Mayor and civic authorities of Washington, the foreign ministers with their suites, foreign consuls, and a vast concourse of citizens, embracing most of the male population of the capital, and many from the adjacent towns and rural districts, drawn together, by the overpowering interest of the occasion, to do honor to the dead.

As the procession moved slowly through the capital to the strains of mournful music, the boom of minute guns from the distant navy yard broke at intervals upon the ear, in measured harmony with the solemn feeling that pervaded every bosom.

In a beautiful grove on the summit of an eminence near Washington, which it overlooks with a wide extent of the surrounding country traversed by the waters of the Potomac, Joel Barlow had prepared for himself a retreat, to which he gave the

name of Kalorama. In a sheltered part of the grounds was a family vault, in which the remains of Decatur were to be now interred, in compliance with the desire of his widow, and with the consent of Colonel Bomford, the present possessor of the place, and an intimate friend of the deceased. Thither they were borne by the long procession of sorrowing friends and patriots. There was consigned to its kindred dust all that was left of the upright man, the generous friend, the faithful husband, the true patriot, the heroic and magnanimous commander. To that spot let our youth repair as to a tutelary shrine, where noble purposes may be formed, and high aspirations kindled, for the good of their country and for their own glory.

CHAPTER XVI.

Personal Appearance of Decatur. — Traits of his Character. — Preference for active Pursuits. — Mental and social Qualities. — Respect for Religion. — Qualifications as a Seaman and Officer. — Opposed to Severity. — How his System succeeded. — His Success not the Result of Fortune, but of Judgment and Deliberation. — His Services to his Country. — Still useful as an Example.

The person of Decatur rose slightly above the middle height, and was vigorously yet gracefully moulded. From his ample shoulders depended

well knit and sinewy arms; his waist was slight, limbs long and well rounded. His whole figure denoted mingled activity and strength, and he eminently excelled in all athletic exercises, being, in particular, a vigorous swimmer, and an adept in the use of arms of every kind. His body, by nature and training, lent itself admirably to the prompting of his active and intrepid spirit. He was patient of fatigue, sparing in his diet, averse to luxurious indulgence.

The erectness of his figure, adding to the appearance of his height, harmonized with the towering arrangement of his head, which, inclining upwards, gave him a spirited and noble air, and contributed to the graceful stateliness of his carriage. His hair and beard were black and curling, his brow lofty and calm, terminating in dark and well arched brows; his eyes large, black, and lustrous, habitually soft and gentle in their expression, but of piercing brightness in moments of excitement. They had that rare brilliancy, which is recorded as having given such an air of majesty to the Macedonian Alexander and Pompey the Great. His nose, rather large than small, was slightly aquiline, on the Grecian more than Roman model; mouth of moderate size, and elegantly curved.

The expression of his countenance, when in repose, was calm, contemplative, and benignant; in conversation, complaisant and persuasive; in scenes of excitement, spirit-stirring and commanding.

The temper of Decatur was naturally excitable

and impetuous; but in his mature years, so completely under command as to exhibit an almost imperturbable calm of manner. An officer, who served long with him, and, being admitted to his intimacy, had opportunities for observing his most unguarded moments, states that he had never once seen him really angry, or at least evincing other evidences of passion than by the indignant flashing of his fine eyes. Others, who were intimately associated with him, bear testimony to the same unvarying self-command.

Only two instances have been brought to the writer's notice, in which this self-command was for a moment interrupted; once in the case of an officer, who, in the discharge of duty, had so far forgotten himself as to kick in the face an old seaman, who stood below him on the bowsprit shrouds, he himself being on the bowsprit, for some disobedience or misapprehension of orders. The outraged seaman presented himself bleeding on the quarter-deck to Decatur, and complained of the indignity. Decatur resented the wrong as if it had been his own, and for a moment, in turn, forgot himself in the violence with which he denounced the conduct of the offender. The other occasion was that, which has been narrated in its proper place, when, in the discharge of his duty as a navy commissioner, a schemer attempted to aid Decatur's conviction of the utility of his invention to the public service, by the offer of a participation in its

profits. Who will fail to find charity within his own bosom for such temporary self-forgetfulness?

The humanity of Decatur manifested itself on various occasions, in efforts to save the lives of others, at the risk of his own. His benevolence exhibited itself, on shipboard, in unwearying attention to the comfort and welfare of all under his command; and the humbler the object, the more actively did it exhibit itself. On shore, his ample means, managed with a judicious and regulated economy, sufficed for the liberal expenditure which adorned his position, and subserved a benevolence the more beautiful, because it manifested itself, as shown above, not "to be seen of men," but according to the divine precept, "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thy alms may be in secret."

He had an ardor in pursuit of honorable aims which obstacles only augmented, a patience which increased by toil, and a courage which gathered earnestness and vivacity from danger. It did not merely consist in the entire absence of fear, but in the ardent desire for glory. This was the ruling passion of his mind. He worshipped honor, and, had he been the hero of ancient times, would have deified and erected altars to it.

The mind of Decatur, like his character, was touched with none of the extravagance, which his romantic achievements might imply. It was chiefly

characterized by a soundness of judgment of men and things, which was rarely at fault. He was shrewd, sagacious, discerning; ingenious also, and had a highly inventive turn, which, besides being of constant use in his profession, directed his attention successfully to various mechanical pursuits. Dr. W. P. C. Barton, who was his surgeon for a time on board the United States, mentions a very beautiful machine invented by Decatur for forming horseshoes by a single operation from a bar of iron. The model, which was both ingenious and elegant, threw out very beautiful little horseshoes of lead. The mechanic, whom he had employed to construct his model, when it had been brought to perfection, believed so fully in its value, that he decamped with it, and was supposed to have carried it to England; and Decatur was soon after diverted, by more congenial pursuits, from prosecuting an invention, which has since been perfected with equal individual profit and public advantage.

Mr. Gallatin has favored the writer with an additional anecdote illustrative of Decatur's inventive genius, directed towards a professional object. In a conversation which Mr. Gallatin had with him in 1811, that gentleman directed his attention towards the use which the French were making of howitzers in field operations, in projecting shells with them in a right line against columns of advancing troops, and which had been found particularly destructive when used against cavalry. Decatur replied, that he had given the subject con-

siderable attention. He had contrived a shell, having four holes in it, which Mr. Gallatin presumed were intended to favor the explosion by the admission of air. Decatur mentioned that he had discharged them from a common ship gun into masses of timber, which, at a quarter of a mile, were rent to pieces by their explosion. He said, however, that, if we had war with England, which was then imminent, he would not use them, as he meant to have fair play with them. The anecdote is significant at once of Decatur's ingenuity, and of his rare magnanimity.*

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* The facts were more strongly riveted in Mr. Gallatin's mind by circumstances, which occurred some ten years later, when he represented his country at the court of France. Colonel Paixhans then presented him with his work on the new projectile which he had invented, and which, bearing his name, has since been introduced into the navies of the world. Marmont, Duke of Ragusa, being on a committee of the Institute to examine this invention, had reported on it most favorably; and Mr. Gallatin, consulting him with regard to it, was assured that it would revolutionize naval warfare. Being of an enthusiastic temperament, he exclaimed to Mr. Gallatin, "Sir, there is no longer any dominion of the seas for England." Captain Spencer of the British navy, now Earl Spencer, to whom Mr. Gallatin afterwards spoke on the subject, was equally confident of the importance of the invention to England, by tending to confirm the superiority of the power, which was superior in numbers and skill. The anecdote is interesting as showing, that the active and ingenious mind of Decatur had anticipated by many years an invention, which has since become formidable.

Mr. Gallatin bears earnest testimony to the agreeable and amiable qualities of Decatur; to his rare modesty, commensurate with his merit; to his cheerful, gay temperament, removed from unbecoming levity.

The vigorous physical conformation of Decatur, his uncommon activity and strength, impelling him to bodily exercise, are said to have led him rather to seek relaxation in the open air, in riding, or more frequently walking over the country with his gun or fishing rod, or in swimming, in which he excelled, than in the studies of the closet.

Dr. Washington furnishes the following incident, illustrative of Decatur's desire to harden and give vigor and activity to his frame, showing that he had ever in view the Spartan motive of disciplining himself for the service of his country. "One of the longest conversations I ever had with Commodore Decatur," he says, "was brought about by my offering him the use of an umbrella when exposed to a hot sun. He declined taking one, and observed that military men should never yield to any indulgence, which might tend in any degree to enervate them, or lessen their hardihood in enduring the exposure incidental to their profession. He took much exercise, which, together with habits of strict temperance, gave him a very active appearance. There was nothing like haughtiness in his manner. I never saw him in the least excited or out of temper. He spoke habitually in rather a low tone of voice."

He was averse to anything sedentary, and therefore preferred in general to study men and things in the active scenes of life, rather than as they are found in books; for, having a quick perception of character and great knowledge of the

world, he was well fitted to mingle advantageously in its social, as in its more stirring scenes. Still he was far from insensible to the charms of what was most solid in literature. History, particularly the more stirring portions of it, which recorded the actions of men whose greatness was kindred to his own; natural history, affording an insight into the wonders of creation, and raising the mind irresistibly to the contemplation of an omniscient Architect of the universe; natural philosophy, unfolding to the mind the workings of the same omnipresent ingenuity and adaptation of the simplest means to the wisest and most beneficent ends; all commanded his attention, and had contributed to store his mind with pleasing and available knowledge. He sympathized, too, with the elegant tastes of Mrs. Decatur in being eminently susceptible to the charms of music, and in delighting in the higher poetry of our language; and had an ardent taste for sculpture and painting, which his frequent visits to the Mediterranean had fostered and refined. He spoke and read Italian fluently, and had a slighter acquaintance with the French.

The clearness of his conceptions, the vigor of his judgment, and the correctness of his taste, occasioned him to express himself in writing with simplicity, purity, and force. His aversion to writing, proverbial among his friends, made him brief. There were both logic and point in what he wrote, put forth without pretension, and appearing to be less the result of ingenuity, than the effect of

well arranged facts. This effect is said to have been equally characteristic of his conversation. Practical good sense, reasonable and moderate rather than extravagant opinions, composed the staple of his talk, the whole seasoned plentifully, when in the society of familiar friends, with sallies of playful wit and delicate irony. These were always chastened by good humor, and never transcended the bounds which protected the feelings of others, or those which guarded the dignity that was his distinguishing characteristic. In his gay, as in his earnest moods, he was ever completely master of himself.

He is said to have been cheerful and entertaining in society, not liable to weariness, and, from a sense of good breeding as well as from temperament, ever disposed to contribute to the general entertainment, and promote innocent mirth. As he took most pleasure in the society of ladies, so also was it there that he shone most advantageously. His demeanor towards them was elegant, easy, and yet deferential, "tinctured," to use the expression of a familiar and acute observer, "with a high toned politeness and polish of manner at once agreeable and captivating." To the same observer the writer is indebted for a passing sketch of Decatur's bearing towards the chosen partner of his affection, which he represents as gentle, attentive, and kind. "A long course of close attention to his conduct revealed to me a most delicate and decorous demeanor,

alike honorable to his heart and his cavalier notions of the treatment of women; a behavior, in short, the very picture of marital propriety."

Decatur was a dutiful and affectionate son. That he was a devoted brother, let the self-forgetfulness with which he avenged a brother slain by a treacherous enemy bear witness. He was a fond, devoted husband; an attached and self-sacrificing friend. To his servants he was a gentle, indulgent, and considerate master; to those who proved worthy of his confidence, less a master than a friend.* For religion and its ministers he had a high respect, and, when within reach of its sanctuaries, attended the services of the Episcopal Church, in whose fellowship he was baptized and reared. One who knew him well observes, that "he had unbounded confidence in the goodness and mercy of God, with a perfect resignation, under all circumstances, to

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* If there be truth at all in the trite proverb, "No man is a hero in the eyes of his valet," it was not true in its application to Decatur. Those who approached nearest to him were most sensible of his goodness. Mr. Lewis Leonori was for several years his steward in different ships. At the close of the English war, Decatur, appreciating his trustworthiness, procured for him a better station, in which that quality would be valuable. On Decatur's recommendation, he was received as porter of the Bank of America. His having continued to fill that office acceptably for thirty years, is the best proof of the just estimate Decatur made of his fidelity and honor. He cannot speak of Decatur's gentleness and unvarying kindness, though the subject is a favorite one, without emotion.

the divine will, and a belief that afflictions are sent in mercy, and intended for our good."

A recently published memoir of Daniel Murray, formerly a lieutenant in the navy, and an intimate friend of Decatur, contains the following allusion to him.

"I remember being present at a conversation, on the subject of religion, between the late John Randolph and Commodore Decatur, who had known Mr. Murray while in the navy. The latter was expressing his difficulties about the universal sinfulness of man's nature. It surprised him, that the best people in the world should always speak of themselves as sinners. He mentioned his own mother as an instance; and then, turning to me, said, 'There, too, is our friend Murray; you know what a man he is; who ever saw anything wrong in him? Is it possible to think of such a man as a sinner? And yet he accounts himself such.' I shall never forget Mr. Randolph's reply to this. He rose from his sofa, walked towards Decatur, stood before him, and, in his emphatic manner, said, 'I well know how dark and unintelligible this subject appears to you, and why it is so; but I trust a time will come when you will know and feel it to be all true, true of all, true of yourself; when you will be self-arraigned and self-condemned; found guilty of sin; not of the sin of cowardice, falsehood, or any mean and dishonorable act; but at least of this, that you have had conferred upon you

great and innumerable favors, and have requited your Benefactor with ingratitude. This will be guilt enough to humble you, and you will feel and own that you are a sinner."

The anecdote proves, that, if he found difficulty in some of the dogmas of our faith, he was far from indifferent to the subject; that it occupied no inconsiderable portion of his thoughts. It is an obvious inference, confirmed by the testimony of those who knew him best, that the intense reverence which he manifested for goodness, as it exhibited itself in his excellent mother and in his friend Murray, should have been brightly reflected from his own heart, and guided and influenced his character.

The ocean and the quarter-deck were, however, the true scenes of Decatur's greatness. A seaman thoroughly acquainted with whatever could be done with a ship, with whatever a ship could do, and practised to exact it; an officer accustomed from an early age to the performance of the most responsible duties; possessing the respect and entire confidence of superiors and equals, the affectionate and enthusiastic attachment and devotion of the sailors, whom he studied to bind to the service and to himself, by attention to their health, their comforts, their sympathies, and even their prejudices, he stood upon the quarter-deck a man of surpassing power.

In the unparalleled devotion to his person, which he ever won from the sailor, he found,

indeed, one of the greatest elements of his success. Xenophon, in the portrait which he has traced of a consummate general, says, "It is the business of a commander not only to be brave himself, but to take such care of those whom he rules that they may be made as brave as possible." Alexander, Hannibal, and Cæsar, as they surpassed all other heroes of antiquity in the qualities of consummate generalship, so are they said to have possessed "an art the most invaluable, of inspiring their troops with that assured pledge of success, implicit confidence in their leaders," and with devoted attachment to their persons. Nelson, too, possessed this art in an eminent degree. His sailors were wont to say of him familiarly, "Our Nel is as brave as a lion, and as gentle as a lamb."

But the records of ancient and of modern warfare may be sought in vain for any instance of loyal devotion in an humble follower, to save the life of his commander, superior to that of the sailor in the struggle on board of the Tripolitan gunboat, when, deprived by wounds of the use of his arms, he interposed his head to stay the uplifted cimeter, which was descending on the head of Decatur; an act done by a common sailor, by an individual removed by the humility of his station from the incitements and the rewards of fame, and therefore the more noble; an act, the glory of which redounds for ever to the intrepid tar who performed it, and to the chieftain

who could only by countless acts of protection, kindness, and sympathy, have won for himself so matchless a devotion.

Decatur cherished and protected his men not merely in obedience to the promptings of a kind heart, but systematically and from principle. He had to contend against the tendency in the navy to a harsher system of discipline than now exists. Oaths, stripes, compulsion in all its forms, were then the incentives to good conduct to which it was most customary to resort. Decatur avowed for himself the purpose to oppose this system of terror, and rather to conciliate the sailors by gentleness and kindness. This may have occasionally thrown him into opposition with such of his officers, as were most disposed to severity.

He remarked to a brother officer once, in explanation of his views on this subject, that the officers of the navy had higher aims and more stringent obligations than the seamen to keep them in the path of duty. They were ever before the eyes of their country and their friends; they had a future before them, which it was within their own power to make brilliant. For the men, there was almost no promotion; no approving or condemning observation of country and of friends; little hope of fame; little, in fact, but present kind treatment and personal comfort of mind and body to hope for. The officers, he said, were placed at his disposal by orders from the navy department, and could be procured at pleasure in unlimited num-

bers. The men could only be enticed into the service by the promise of kind treatment, and kept there by its fulfilment. He studied earnestly and successfully to bind them to the navy and to himself. Moreover, they were, compared with the officers, the weaker party, and on this account appealed irresistibly to his magnanimity. His humanity revolted at the infliction of punishment. He preferred to avail himself of the moral restraints, which he derived from his hold upon the heart.

That Decatur's system answered well for himself, is certain. No commander ever had more entirely the devoted attachment of his followers. The substitution of love for fear, as a principle of restraint, as a motive to exertion, gave him in emergencies, in connection with his other qualities for command, an ascendency, a momentum, moral and physical, not easily to be withstood.

Aided by this ascendency, he performed what he did perform; successfully accomplished the desperate enterprise of carrying and destroying the Philadelphia frigate, moored under formidable batteries, in a small ketch, with a little band of brave companions; triumphed in the brilliant series of hand to hand combats with the Tripolitan gunboats; captured one of the most efficient frigates in the British navy; baffled and withstood for nearly a day, in the President, the overpowering force by which she was assailed, and, had he been favored by circumstances, would have executed successfully the most brilliant conception of his

life, and, taking the Endymion out of the British squadron, which pursued him, have brought her into port, to be the brightest trophy of his valor. As it was, he beat off and silenced her, in the presence of four times his force.

To the confidence which he inspired, and to the attachment of his followers, was Decatur also much indebted for the celerity with which he equipped his squadron to make war upon Algiers; traversing the ocean, capturing part of the enemy's squadron, and concluding a peace, which abolished for ever Algerine slavery, that for centuries had been the reproach of Christendom, so far as his own countrymen were concerned, and which directly and quickly led to its general abolition; the whole being accomplished in the period of forty days from the time of leaving our waters.*

It has been the fashion to attribute Decatur's

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* One of the greatest claims which Pompey established upon the gratitude of his countrymen was for having, in forty days, with a force of sixty galleys, cleared the waters of the Mediterranean, adjacent to Rome, of all piratical adventurers, leaving the seas safe for the transit of peaceful traders. On his return, the population of Rome, dazzled by the unexpected celerity with which he had executed his commission, sallied out to receive him with shouts of joy, exclaiming, that "the very name of Pompey had terminated the war." Decatur, starting from the opposite side of an ocean nearly four thousand miles beyond the remotest limits known to Pompey, had made the seas safe for his countrymen in as brief a period. They, too, might with justice have exclaimed, "The very name of our Decatur has terminated the war."

successes to his luck; to the happy influences of a fortunate star. But never did a commander encounter a more unbroken series of adverse circumstances, than Decatur did in sailing in the President from New York. By striking on the bar, a disaster which he could neither have foreseen nor prevented, he injured his ship, and lost her sailing qualities. The two hours passed there brought him at daylight, the following morning, in contact with the British squadron, instead of twenty miles or more beyond it. In the course of the following day, he was becalmed, whilst his enemies brought up a fresh breeze. On the succeeding night, he had fine and bright weather, at the season of storms, which indeed quickly followed the capture of his ship, and which, occurring earlier, would have permitted his escape.

The fortune of Decatur, like that of Cæsar, was dependent mainly upon himself; upon the happy ascendency within him of the qualities essential to success, of a spirit prone to hardy enterprises, an accurate judgment, undisturbed by difficulties or dangers, capable of estimating, at all times, the obstacles to be overcome and his means to overcome them, and always exercised in calm and careful deliberation, before acting; upon a steady confidence in his own intrepidity and force of character, and in the resistless impetus with which his example and their affection inspired his followers; upon his own matchless courage and prowess; upon his celerity of thought and action; and

upon that imperturbable calmness of temper which left him, in critical situations, master of himself, of others, and of events.*

The youth of Decatur was amiable, engaging, and full of promise; his maturer years were successfully employed in defending the rights, elevating the fame, and promoting the best interests of his country; for a principle involving, as he believed, the best interests of his country, he freely laid down his life; true, first and last, to his family motto, "*Pro libertate et patriâ dulce periculum.*" Recreant indeed must that country be, when it fails

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* No one knew Decatur better than Mr. Littleton Waller Tazewell, who brought to the appreciation of his character the powers of a commanding intellect. In the Senate of the United States, February, 1828, the bill for the relief of the captors of the Philadelphia being under consideration, this gentleman gave the following character of Decatur, showing how little he acted from mere impulse and depended upon luck. "No man was more deliberate in his conduct than Decatur. In carrying into effect the most daring project, he was directed by the coolest judgment. There was nothing rash in his conduct, though nothing could exceed his intrepidity."

Dr. W. P. C. Barton, who had opportunities for observing him closely, confirms this testimony of his calm deliberation, and adds interesting information of his freedom from passion, and perfect self-command; "I never saw him in a passion; his fine eyes alone, not his words, showed when he was disturbed. Such was his habitual self-command, that anger assumed with him the chastened semblance of displeasure, more or less stern according to the occasion exciting it. In a word, he was dispassionate, deliberate, collected, and cool, always, always, always."

to appreciate the value of his services, and duly to honor his memory.

Decatur's services to his country were not only great and useful at the time they were rendered, but they still remain after him, an undying legacy. Coleridge remarks in his noble eulogium of Sir Alexander Ball, that "such is the power of dispensing blessings, which Providence has attached to the truly great and good, that they cannot even die without advantage to their fellow-creatures; for death consecrates their example."

Decatur seems to have impressed most forcibly this profound thinker and discriminating observer. In the "Friend," written much nearer the time of his meeting Decatur at Malta, than that of the conversation heretofore quoted from his "Table Talk," he gives the following version of Decatur's opinion concerning the acquisition of Louisiana.

"An American commander, who has deserved and received the highest honors which his grateful country, through her assembled representatives, could bestow upon him, once said to me, with a sigh, 'In an evil hour for my country did the French and Spaniards abandon Louisiana to the United States. We were not sufficiently a country before; and should we ever be mad enough to drive the English from Canada, and her other North American provinces, we

shall soon cease to be a country at all. Without local attachment, without national honor, we shall resemble a swarm of insects, that settle on the fruits of the earth to corrupt and consume them, rather than men who love and cleave to the land of their forefathers. After a shapeless anarchy, and a series of civil wars, we shall at last be formed into many countries; unless the vices engendered in the process should demand further punishment, and we should previously fall beneath the despotism of some military adventurer, like a lion consumed by an inward disease, prostrate and helpless, beneath the beak and talons of a vulture, or yet meaner bird of prey.'"

At a later period of his own life, and of his country's existence as a nation, Decatur might not perhaps have looked with so much apprehension on the extension of our territory. But time alone can decide the truth of his opinion.

Decatur, as much as any individual, redeemed the character of the country from the reproaches which opposing interests, and the jealousy of adverse institutions and commercial rivalry, had cast upon it. Though dead, he yet lives in the record of his heroic deeds, and in the awe with which they inspired the enemies of his country. Major Henry Lee, one of Napoleon's worthiest historians, when Consul-General of the United States at Algiers, in a despatch to the state department, thus eloquently enforces this view of the lasting character of Decatur's services.

"I mention these circumstances, not only to evince the efficacy of the mode of proceeding, which was prescribed to me, but in order to mark the elevation to which our national character and influence in this quarter have been advanced, by the prudence and ability of my worthy predecessor, Mr. Shaler, and by the good conduct of our naval commanders in the Mediterranean; but chiefly by the prowess of one, whose services and glory could not save him from an early and a hapless fate. In this distant region, on this barbarous shore, in tongues that are strange and various, the name of Decatur is remembered in honor, and repeated with respect; his country profiting by his valor long after his mortal frame has mouldered into dust. So valuable may be the virtues of one officer to his fellow-citizens."

It will not be forgotten, either abroad or at home, that a country which once produced a Decatur may produce others like him. In this view also he still survives to animate the youthful aspirant for naval honors, by the splendor of his example. Let the youth of our navy keep this high mark steadily before them, aiming to be like Decatur in all things but his end, and, undismayed by the perfection of their model, find encouragement in the assurance contained in the familiar ancient motto, "He will reach the highest, who aims at the summit." Let them approach as near as they may to their

high mark, treading after him, though with unequal steps, even if they reach not the lofty eminence which he attained, who revived in our days much of what was best in chivalry, and won for himself the proud titles of "Terror of the Foe;" "Champion of Christendom;" "Bayard of the Seas."

APPENDIX.

No I.

Anecdotes of Decatur.

Extract from a Letter written by Mr. Richard Rush to Mrs. Decatur, dated Sydenham, near Philadelphia, May 22d, 1846.

It is true, that I was your husband's fellow-townsman and schoolmate. It was at the old Protestant Episcopal Academy in Philadelphia; and I remember, as all do, his chivalrous and daring spirit in boyhood. Here is one instance. The *élite* of the town went to that school; amongst them the young McCalls. One of these got into a quarrel with young Decatur, and wanted to fight him. Decatur refused, on the ground that McCall was not a match for him, being under size, but said that he would fight him and one of his brothers together; and so he fought the two. How it ended, exactly, I forget, but remember that it was a famous juvenile battle, and believe that neither side earned Macbeth's curse by crying, "Hold, enough." Take another little incident. We used to bathe in the Delaware near a bank called the "Old Fort," in the neighborhood of where the navy yard now is. Once, while the boys were swimming about, a few made for a ship moored to a wharf at hand, that they might dive from her side. One of them ran up the bowsprit quite out to the tip end of the jib-boom,

from which he instantly plunged head foremost into the stream. It was Decatur. Shouts rose from the boys, and the very sailors may have been amazed, as the ship was large and the height seemed fearful. It recalls the anecdote in the life of Lord Clive, who, when a boy, climbed the steeple of Market Drayton, and seated himself on a cross near the summit, to the terror of the good people of the town, who saw him from below.

As is known to you, it was also my good fortune to maintain a friendship with your distinguished husband in mature life. I followed, with a keen interest, (as which of us did not?) his bright career of glory in the navy from first to last. But the part of my intercourse with him most frequent and intimate, and therefore recalled with the liveliest pleasure, was after the war of 1812, when you lived in Washington; where our society, to the eminent attraction of our home circles, added accomplished circles from abroad; the De Neuvilles from France, Sir Charles and Lady Bagot from England, and others, all well known to you, who were of their front rank. Especially would I recur to the summer and autumn of 1817, as unfolding to me new traits in his character.

It was the period, which preceded my embarkation on the English mission, when I enjoyed so much of his hospitality, with you at the head of his table, my own household in Washington being broken up, and my wife and children at her father's in Annapolis, to await our sailing from that port in the Franklin seventy-four; a temporary state of existence with me, which made your hospitalities doubly acceptable and delightful. You lived in one of the Seven Buildings at that time, and I was at a neighboring hotel. Next door to you, in another of those buildings, lived at one time the President, the great and good Madison; the presidential mansion being in course of

rebuilding, after being burnt by the British during the war. Of Mr. Madison's friendship your husband enjoyed a large and very gratifying share, strengthened by almost daily intercourse with him. Let me add, as known to me, that Mr. Madison, of whose cabinet, in 1815 and 1816, I was a young and humble member, (and here I am alluding to those years,) was impressed with the enlargement of your husband's views and conversation, and, above all, his enlightened thirst for correct knowledge of the true elements of our constitutional government. Well indeed did he know, that he was addressing himself to the fountain-head of such knowledge, in whatever inquiries he made of his illustrious friend and neighbor, who, in turn, was always ready to shed light on such inquiries. In this connection it is also known to me, that Mr. Madison kindly designated, with his own pencil or pen, in the copy of the Federalist, which the Commodore was reading, the numbers of that great work written by General Hamilton, Mr. Jay, or himself.

Carried back to those days, I am induced to mention a single anecdote, naval in its nature, though I had intended to let that field alone, abandoning it wholly to the able author of the forthcoming life of the Commodore.

One day, when he was dining with me at Washington, with a few other naval officers, the conversation, after dinner, turned upon the naval history and battles of England. He remarked, that he thought England would change her mode of fighting in large fleets, if ever she encountered a skilful enemy fleet to fleet. To sustain this position, he analyzed the battle of Trafalgar; and whilst enthusiastically admiring Nelson's heroism, said that he, nevertheless, owed that victory to the extraordinary deficiency of the French and Spaniards in their

naval gunnery, alleging that, if it had been true and quick on that occasion, the English ships must have been crippled more or less, and some of them cut to pieces while in the very act of breaking the enemy's line. He gave his illustrations with nutshells on the table, arranged to show the relative positions and manœuvring of the two fleets; and I remember his dwelling with emphasis on the vital importance of gunnery in naval discipline and practice, saying that everything else went for nothing at all (as must be obvious) without it, unless you mean to fight only by boarding; and that to make it perfect, the men must not only be laboriously exercised at the guns in rough as well as smooth weather, but with ball cartridge, at the target, rising and falling in the water.

The topic called up Rodney's action with De Grasse, towards the close of our revolutionary war, on which occasion Rodney's leading ship, the Marlborough, received the successive broadsides of more than twenty of the French ships of the line, and this at near distance, without losing more than half a dozen of her men, or sustaining any material damage. Could naval firing, he asked, be more wild? and declared, that, if the guns of the French fleet had been well served, the Marlborough must have been destroyed. It was plain that he had no opinion of breaking the line as a mode of attack, unless you were full sure of your enemy's defects in seamanship and gunnery.

I must relate one anecdote more, which I have often told with pleasure. Soon after his early renown, acquired in such brilliant ways in our naval war with Tripoli, for which he had been raised to a post-captaincy, far in advance of regular promotion, he was once staying at the country-seat of his father, near Frankford, whom my father, long the family physician of the elder Decatur,

was then attending during a fit of illness. In one of his visits, he found "Stephen," as he was accustomed to call your husband, having known him from childhood, more than usually disposed to conversation. At last he said, "Doctor, I am going to speak to you as to a friend. By good fortune, I have risen fast in my profession, but my rank is ahead of my acquirements. I went young into the navy; my education was cut short, and I neglected the opportunities of improvement I had when a boy. For professional knowledge, I hope to get along, expecting to increase it as I grow older; but for other kinds of knowledge, I feel my deficiencies, and want your friendly aid towards getting the better of them. Will you favor me with a list of such books, historical, and others of a standard nature, as you think will best answer my purpose, that I may devote myself at all intervals to the perusal of them?"

It was so, as nearly as may be, that he spoke. I often heard my father repeat his words; and, my dear madam, how they exalt the character of your husband! It was not merely that his valor, services, patriotism, and resources for war, were all of the highest order, but that he had high and noble aspirations of all kinds. He desired to fit himself for the highest intercourse of mankind, as the appropriate atmosphere of qualities that nature had made great in him, and which were seconded by the mingled dignity, urbanity, and, let me add, taking the words of an English ambassador, "the soldierly grace" of his manners. With the fire of his eye, there was also a mild lustre, and sometimes an archness, which I can still bring vividly before me. His ambition grew more elevated with his every new achievement. He looked to still broader spheres of excellence and usefulness; and but for his untimely loss to his country and to

you, great as his fame then was, I cannot doubt but that there would have been rich accessions to it.

No. II.

Notice of Reuben James.

Reuben James, the heroic young American, who interposed his own head to protect that of Decatur, and saved the life of his commander without losing his own, was born in Delaware. When a boy, he entered the navy, and was with Truxtun, in the Constellation, in the actions with the Insurgent and Vengeance. He was with Decatur in the capture of the Philadelphia, as well as in that of the two gunboats.

After he recovered from his wounds, Decatur asked him what situation there was within his gift, which he could confer on him, and what he could do to advance his fortunes. Reuben was a quarter-gunner at the time. Taking off his hat, he said, after a short pause, "Nothing, Sir, but to let somebody else hand out the hammocks to the men when they are piped down. That is a sort of business that I do not exactly like."

He followed his commander and friend from the Enterprise to the Constitution, and to the Congress, and continued by his side throughout the last war, assisting in the capture of the Macedonian, and in the noble defence of the President against the British squadron which captured her. In this last action, he received three wounds, before he would suffer himself to be carried below. Following Decatur to the Algerine war, he assisted in the capture of the Masouda.

The writer is aware that the act thus ascribed to Reuben James, has been sometimes ascribed to Daniel Frazer, another favorite follower of Decatur. After examining all the testimony on the subject, and having recently conversed with officers, who had the particulars of the encounter from Reuben James himself, and who saw the deep wound in the head, which he received on the occasion, the writer is convinced that he was the real actor in this memorable scene of heroic self-devotion.

In the more peaceful times, that have succeeded, he has served extensively on the stations visited by our ships; and most of the officers of the navy, the writer among the number, have been his shipmates. In 1836 he arrived at Washington, on business connected with his pension. Suffering severely from an old gunshot wound in the leg, he was obliged to submit to amputation; jocosely complaining, that it was "hardly ship-shape to put him under jury-masts when in harbor." Being reduced by the operation to the brink of the grave, he prepared to submit quietly to his doom, only begging the surgeon, Dr. Foltz, "to ease him off handsomely."

But his time had not yet come. The hardness of his skull, as exhibited when he interposed it to shield his chief, was but a fair specimen of the toughness of his constitution and character. His body, riddled by bullets and sabre cuts, and battered by forty years of toil and exposure in every clime, resisted the approach of dissolution. It became expedient to administer stimulants, to which, indeed, his shipmates will remember he had no inveterate aversion. Dr. Foltz asked him whether he preferred brown stout or brandy toddy. He replied, "Suppose, Doctor, you give us

both." He recovered from the operation, and was restored to health. Perhaps he may yet survive, an honorable specimen of the American tar, and a living example of the devoted and enthusiastic attachment which Decatur knew how to inspire.

It may be questioned whether history affords many parallels to the act of this humble seaman. One at least may be found in the case of another seaman, John Sykes, Nelson's cockswain, who, in a hand to hand engagement in boats, off Cadiz, having twice parried blows aimed at Nelson, interposed his head to intercept a sabre, whose stroke he could not otherwise ward off. Home states, in his account of the Scottish rebellion of 1745, that the Highlanders ever held themselves ready to die for their chiefs, and that individuals had been known to interpose their persons to save the chief of their clan. But he cites no particular instance; and if he had, such an act would lose something of its sublimity, from being less an effort of individual self-devotion, than the result of a special training from childhood, and of obedience to a traditional law. The act of the soldier of Belisarius, who saved the life of that renowned commander, by interposing his hand to receive an arrow, which would else have transfixed his general, is still commemorated in history, after an interval of thirteen centuries. In the battle at the Granicus, Clytus gained a renown, which has descended to our times, through twenty centuries, by slaying a Persian, who was in the act of cutting down Alexander with a battle-axe. And the conqueror, whose life he had thus saved, when heated with wine at the festive board, and vaunting his own achievements, repaid his preserver by transfixing him with a spear, because the

courage, to which Alexander owed his preservation, imboldened Clytus to rebuke the vanity of his chief, by repeating these lines from the Andromache of Euripides;

"When with the spoils of vanquished foes the host
A trophy rear, they think not how 'twas gained
By those brave soldiers, who endure the toil
Of battle, while the general bears away
All the renown. Though he was only one,
Who stood 'midst thousands brandishing his spear,
Nor any single combatant surpassed,
He gains a larger portion of applause."

Decatur, more magnanimous, in this respect, than Alexander, was ever mindful of all the obligations he owed, not merely to him who preserved his life at the imminent risk of his own, but to all, who, even in the humblest stations, contributed to his glory. Ought not a republic to be sensible of the services of the lowliest of its citizens? Who is better entitled than Reuben James, if alive, to the reverence and admiration of his countrymen, or, if dead, to have his matchless act of self-devotion commemorated, on the rotunda of the Capitol, by the side of the chief, whom he loved and saved?

No. III.

Remarks on the Resolution of Congress concerning the Captors of the Philadelphia Frigate in the Harbor of Tripoli.

The inappropriateness of this testimonial to the officers of the Intrepid must be obvious to every person of refinement. Officers, who would rush as they did to

take part in such an enterprise, were precisely of a character to feel sensibly the indignity, however unintentional, of this acknowledgment of their gallantry. All the officers of the Intrepid rejected the donation. It was inappropriate as an honor, insufficient as a compensation for prize money. The reader will, no doubt, be pained, as well as surprised, to learn, that, beyond this donation, Congress has never, from that day to the present, voted a cent of indemnification for prize money to the captors of the Philadelphia.

The law of Congress for the distribution of prize money, in cases where captured vessels are sent in and adjudicated, awards the whole amount to the captors when the vessel taken was of equal or superior force to the capturing vessel, and one half in all other cases. Where, however, the captured vessel has been either restored to the original owners on the conclusion of peace, sunk or burnt by the captors, or even recaptured from them, Congress has, in all other cases except this of the Philadelphia, indemnified the captors, either in the whole or in half the sum, which they would have received had the prize been sent in and sold. Thus, when Commodore Preble returned two Moorish ships, which his squadron had captured, to the Emperor of Morocco, on the conclusion of peace, Congress voted $13,594, being half their value, to be distributed among the captors.

The captors of the Guerriere and Java received $50,000 for each of those vessels, which they set on fire; and $25,000 each were paid for the Frolic and Levant, though they were recaptured by the enemy. Congress voted $100,000 to Decatur and his followers for their share of the Algerine frigate and brig, which they took in 1815, and gave up to the Dey on the conclusion of

peace. In the case of the British sloop Hermes, blown up in September, 1814, whilst attacking Fort Boyer, in Mobile, by hot shot from the batteries, Congress voted the garrison an indemnification of her full value, estimated at $40,000. These soldiers did their duty gallantly; but they were fighting a vessel entering our waters, in defence of their fort, from the security of ample breastworks. With how much better claim could the crew of the Intrepid ask indemnity for attacking, with a ketch of four guns, a frigate of forty, moored in an enemy's port, and surrounded by formidable defences, both floating and stationary!

Decatur was fully aware of the justice of his claim, and was urged by his legal adviser, Mr. Tazewell, to prefer it as a duty incumbent on him, "as the guardian and protector of the officers and people associated with him in this daring and honorable enterprise." Sensible as he was to such an appeal in behalf of his brave followers, the delicacy which marked his character restrained him from urging a pecuniary claim, in which he had himself the deepest interest. He died without having brought it forward.

Some years after his death, a bill was introduced in Congress for granting $100,000 to the captors of the Philadelphia. The justice of the claim was recognized with few dissenting voices, and it gave occasion to many glowing tributes to the eminent virtues and public services of Decatur. It readily passed the Senate by a great majority, but was unhappily arrested in the House by a difference of opinion as to the mode of distribution.

Ought not an indemnity, admitted to be so justly due for one of the most brilliant of our naval victories, to be awarded without further delay? Children of Preble remain, under whose orders the service was executed.

The widow of Decatur still survives, in ill health and poverty, finding in the consolations of religion alone alleviation of her sorrows. The widow of Lawrence yet lives, now childless, as well as widowed. Commodore Morris remains, serving usefully and adorning his country. Representatives doubtless exist of many or most of those who contributed, even in the humblest stations, to this deed of glory. May they no longer be deprived of what is so justly their due, and what they would doubtless cherish less for its intrinsic value, than as a merited acknowledgment of heroic services to the republic.

No. IV.

Official Report of the Capture and Destruction of the Philadelphia.

To Commodore Edward Preble, commanding the United States Squadron in the Mediterranean.

On board the Ketch Intrepid.
At Sea, February 17th, 1804.

Sir,

I have the honor to inform you, that, in pursuance of your orders, of the 31st ultimo, to proceed with this ketch off the harbor of Tripoli, there to endeavor to effect the destruction of the United States frigate Philadelphia, I arrived there in company with the United States brig Siren, Lieutenant Commandant Stewart, on the 7th, but, owing to the badness of the weather, was unable to effect anything until last evening, when we had a light breeze from the N. E. At seven o'clock I entered the harbor with the Intrepid, the

Siren having gained her station without the harbor, in a situation to support us in our retreat. At half past nine o'clock, laid her alongside of the Philadelphia, boarded, and, after a short contest, carried her. I immediately fired her in the store rooms, gun room, cockpit, and berth deck, and remained on board until the flames had issued from the spar deck, hatchways, and ports; and before I had got from alongside, the fire had communicated to the rigging and tops. Previous to our boarding, they had got their tompions out, and hailed several times, but not a gun was fired.

The noise occasioned by boarding and contending for possession, although no firearms were used, gave a general alarm on shore, and on board their cruisers, which lay about a cable and a half's length from us; and many boats filled with men lay around, but from whom we received no annoyance. They commenced a fire on us from all their batteries on shore, but with no other effect, than one shot passing through our top-gallant-sail.

The frigate was moored within half gunshot of the Bashaw's Castle, and of their principal battery. Two of their cruisers lay within two cables' length on the starboard quarter, and their gunboats within half gunshot on the starboard bow. She had all her guns mounted and loaded, which, as they became hot, went off. As she lay with her broadside to the town, I have no doubt but some damage has been done by them. Before I got out of the harbor, her cables had burnt off, and she drifted in under the Castle, where she was consumed. I can form no judgment as to the number of men on board; but there were twenty killed. A large boat full got off, and many leaped into the sea. We have made one prisoner, and I fear, from the

number of bad wounds he has received, he will not recover, although every assistance and comfort have been given him.

I boarded with sixty men and officers, leaving a guard on board the ketch for her defence; and it is with the greatest pleasure I inform you, I had not a man killed in this affair, and but one slightly wounded. Every support that could be given I received from my officers; and as the conduct of each was highly meritorious, I beg leave to enclose you a list of their names. Permit me also, Sir, to speak of the brave fellows I have the honor to command, whose coolness and intrepidity were such as I trust will ever characterize the American tars.

It would be injustice in me, were I to pass over the important services rendered by Mr. Salvadore, the pilot, on whose good conduct the success of the enterprise in the greatest degree depended. He gave me entire satisfaction.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

STEPHEN DECATUR.

No. V.

OFFICIAL REPORT OF THE CAPTURE OF THE MACEDONIAN.

To the Honorable Paul Hamilton, Secretary of the Navy.

United States Ship United States.
At Sea, October 30th, 1812.

SIR,

I have the honor to inform you, that, on the 25th instant, being in latitude 29° N., longitude 29°

30′ W., we fell in with, and, after an action of an hour and a half, captured his Britannic Majesty's ship Macedonian, commanded by Captain John Carden, and mounting forty-nine carriage guns, the odd gun shifting. She is a frigate of the largest class, two years old, four months out of dock, and reputed one of the best sailers in the British service. The enemy, being to windward, had the advantage of engaging us at his own distance, which was so great, that, for the first half hour, we did not use our carronades; and at no moment was he within the complete effect of our musketry or grape. To this circumstance and a heavy swell, which was on at the time, I ascribe the unusual length of the action.

The enthusiasm of every officer, seaman, and marine on board this ship, on discovering the enemy, their steady conduct in battle, and precision of their fire, could not be surpassed. Where all met my fullest expectations, it would be unjust in me to discriminate. Permit me, however, to recommend to your particular notice my first lieutenant, William H. Allen. He has served with me upwards of five years, and to his unremitted exertions in disciplining the crew is to be attributed the obvious superiority of our gunnery, exhibited in the result of this contest.

Subjoined is a list of the killed and wounded on both sides. Our loss, compared with that of the enemy, will appear small. Amongst our wounded, you will observe the name of Lieutenant Funk, who died a few hours after the action. He was an officer of great gallantry and promise, and the service has sustained a severe loss in his death.

The Macedonian lost her mizzen mast, fore and main topmasts, and main yard, and was much cut up in her

hull. The damage sustained by this ship was not such as to render her return into port necessary, and, had I not deemed it important that we should see our prize in, should have continued our cruise.

With the highest consideration and respect,
I am, Sir, your obedient, humble servant,
STEPHEN DECATUR.

No. VI.

PRIVATE LETTER OF DECATUR, ON THE CAPTURE OF THE MACEDONIAN.

ON the same day that Decatur wrote the preceding official letter, he communicated the same agreeable intelligence in the following private letter to Mrs. Decatur, which, though intended for no eye but hers, she has allowed to be published, in justice to his character, which it exhibits so pleasingly.

"Frigate United States.
"At Sea, October 30th, 1812.

"MY BELOVED SUSAN,

"I have had the good fortune to capture His Britannic Majesty's frigate Macedonian, Captain Carden, by which I have gained a small sprig of laurel, which I shall hasten to lay at your feet. I tried burning on a former occasion, which might do for a very young man; but now that I have a precious little wife, I wish to have something more substantial to offer, in case she should become weary of love and glory.

"One half of the satisfaction arising from this victo-

ry is destroyed in seeing the distress of poor Carden, who deserved success as much as we did, who had the good fortune to obtain it. I do all I can to console him.

"Do not be anxious about me, my beloved. I shall soon press you to my heart.

"Your devoted,

"S. DECATUR."

No. VII.

OFFICIAL REPORT OF THE LOSS OF THE PRESIDENT.

To the Honorable Benjamin W. Crowninshield, Secretary of the Navy.

His Britannic Majesty's Ship Endymion.
At Sea, January 18th, 1815.

SIR,

The painful duty of detailing to you the particular causes, which preceded and led to the capture of the late United States frigate President, by a squadron of his Britannic Majesty's ships, as per margin,* has devolved upon me. In my communication of the 14th, I made known to you my intention of proceeding to sea on that evening. Owing to some mistake of the pilots, the ship, in going out, grounded on the bar, where she continued to strike heavily for an hour and a half. Although she had broken several of her rudder braces, and had received such other material injury, as to render her return into port desirable, I

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* Razee Majestic, frigates Endymion, Pomone, Tenedos, and brig Despatch.

was unable to do so, from the strong westerly wind, which was then blowing.

It being now high water, it became necessary to force her over the bar before the tide fell. In this we succeeded before ten o'clock, when we shaped our course along the shore of Long Island, for fifty miles, and then steered southeast by east. At five o'clock, three ships were discovered ahead; we immediately hauled up the ship, and passed two miles to the northward of them. At daylight, we discovered four ships in chase, one on each quarter, and two astern, the leading ship of the enemy a razee. She commenced a fire upon us, but without effect. At meridian, the wind became light and baffling. We had increased our distance from the razee; but the next ship astern, which was also a large ship, had gained, and continued to gain on us considerably.

We immediately occupied all hands to lighten ship, by starting water, cutting away the anchors, throwing overboard provisions, cables, spare spars, boats, and every article that could be got at, keeping the sails wet from the royals down. At three, we had the wind quite light; the enemy, who had now been joined by a brig, had a strong breeze, and were coming up with us rapidly. The Endymion, mounting fifty guns, twenty-four pounders on the main deck, had now approached us within gunshot, and had commenced a fire with her bow guns, which we returned from our stern. At five o'clock, she had obtained a station on our starboard quarter, within half point blank shot, on which neither our stern nor quarter guns would bear. We were now steering east by north, the wind northwest. I remained with her in this position for half an hour, in the hope she would close with us

on our broadside, in which case I had prepared my crew to board; but from his continuing to yaw his ship, to maintain his position, it became evident that to close was not his intention.

Every fire now cut some of our sails and rigging. To have continued our course, under these circumstances, would have been placing it in his power to cripple us, without being subject to injury himself; and to have hauled up more to the northward, to bring our stern guns to bear, would have exposed us to his raking fire. It was now dusk, when I determined to alter my course to south, for the purpose of bringing the enemy abeam; and, although their ships astern were drawing up fast, I felt satisfied I should be enabled to throw him out of the combat before they could come up, and was not without hopes, if the night proved dark, of which there was every appearance, that I might still be enabled to effect my escape. Our opponent kept off at the same instant we did, and our fire commenced at the same time. We continued engaged, steering south, with steering sails set, two hours and a half, when we completely succeeded in dismantling her.

Previously to her dropping entirely out of the action, there were intervals of minutes, when the ships were broadside and broadside, in which she did not fire a gun. At this period, half past eight o'clock, although dark, the other ships of the squadron were in sight, and almost within gunshot. We were of course compelled to abandon her. In resuming our former course for the purpose of avoiding the squadron, we were compelled to present our stern to our antagonist; but such was his state, though we were thus exposed and within range of his guns for half an hour, that he did not avail himself of this favorable opportunity of raking us.

We continued this course until eleven o'clock, when two fresh ships of the enemy, the Pomone and the Tenedos, had come up. The Pomone had opened her fire on the larboard bow, within musket shot; the other about two cables' length astern, taking a raking position on our quarter; and the rest, with the exception of the Endymion, within gunshot. Thus situated, with about one fifth of my crew killed and wounded, my ship crippled, and a more than fourfold force opposed to me, without a chance of escape left, I deemed it my duty to surrender.

It is with emotions of pride I bear testimony to the gallantry and steadiness of every officer and man I had the honor to command on this occasion; and I feel satisfied that the fact of their having beaten a force equal to themselves, in the presence and almost under the guns of a so vastly superior force, when, too, it was almost self evident, that whatever their exertions might be, they must ultimately be captured, will be taken as evidence of what they would have performed, had the force opposed to them been in any degree equal.

It is with extreme pain I have to inform you that Lieutenants Babbit, Hamilton, and Howell fell in the action. They have left no officers of superior merit behind them.

If, Sir, the issue of this affair had been fortunate, I should have felt it my duty to have recommended to your attention Lieutenants Shubrick and Gallagher. They maintained throughout the day the reputation they had acquired in former actions.

Lieutenant Twiggs, of the marines, displayed great zeal. His men were well supplied, and their fire incomparable, so long as the enemy continued within musket range.

Midshipman Randolph, who had charge of the forecastle division, managed it to my entire satisfaction.

From Mr. Robinson, who was serving as a volunteer, I received essential aid, particularly after I was deprived of the services of the master, and the severe loss I had sustained in my officers on the quarter-deck.

Of our loss in killed and wounded I am unable at present to give you a correct statement; the attention of the surgeon being so entirely occupied with the wounded, that he was unable to make out a correct return when I left the President; nor shall I be able to make it until our arrival in port, we having parted company with the squadron yesterday. The enclosed list, with the exception, I fear, of its being short of the number, will be found correct.

For twenty-four hours after the action, it was nearly calm, and the squadron were occupied in repairing the crippled ships. Such of the crew of the President, as were not badly wounded, were put on board the different ships; myself and a part of my crew were put on board this ship. On the 17th, we had a gale from the eastward, when this ship lost her bowsprit, fore and main masts, and mizzen topmast, all of which were badly wounded, and was, in consequence of her disabled condition, obliged to throw overboard all her upper deck guns. Her loss in killed and wounded must have been very great. I have not been able to ascertain the extent. Ten were buried after I came on board, thirty-six hours after the action. The badly wounded, such as are obliged to keep their cots, occupy the starboard side of the gun deck from the cabin bulkhead to the mainmast. From the crippled state of the President's spars, I feel satisfied she could not have saved her masts; and I feel serious apprehensions for the safety of our wounded left on board.

It is due to Captain Hope to state, that every attention has been paid by him to myself and officers that have been placed on board his ship, that delicacy and humanity could dictate.

I have the honor to be, &c.

STEPHEN DECATUR.

No. VIII.

OFFICIAL REPORTS OF THE NAVAL OPERATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN IN 1815.

To the Honorable Benjamin W. Crowninshield, Secretary of the Navy.

United States Ship Guerriere.
Off Gibraltar, June 15th, 1815.

SIR,

I have the honor to inform you of our arrival off this place on the 15th, after a passage of twenty-five days, having previously communicated with Cadiz and Tangiers. The Spitfire, Torch, and Firefly separated from the squadron, during a gale of wind, on the 26th ultimo, and the Ontario on the 31st.

I am happy to find they have, with the exception of the Firefly, all arrived. The latter vessel, I fear, may have lost her spars, and have returned to the United States. From all the information I can collect, I feel assured that the Algerines have returned into the Mediterranean. The vessels that had separated from us are now joining, and I shall proceed in search of the enemy forthwith.

I have the honor to be, &c.

STEPHEN DECATUR.

Extract of a Letter from Commodore Decatur, dated off Carthagena, June 19th, 1815.

I have the honor to inform you, that, on the 17th instant, off Cape de Gat, the squadron fell in with and captured an Algerine frigate of forty-six guns, and between four and five hundred men, commanded by Rais Hammida, who bore the title of admiral. She struck her flag after a running fight of twenty-five minutes.

The Admiral was killed at the commencement of the action. After the Guerriere, which, from her favorable position, was enabled to bring the enemy to close action, had fired two broadsides, they, with the exception of a few musketeers, ran below. The Guerriere had four men wounded by musket shot, which is the only injury done by the enemy in this affair.

We have four hundred and six prisoners, including the wounded. The prisoners state that about thirty were killed and thrown overboard.

Their squadron is said to be cruising in our vicinity. Five days ago, they were off this place. Unless I obtain some further intelligence of them to-morrow, I shall proceed to Algiers, in the hope to intercept their return. For the present, I have determined to send the prize into Carthagena.

To the Honorable Benjamin W. Crowninshield, Secretary of the Navy.

United States Ship Guerriere.
Off Cape Palos, June 20th, 1815.

SIR,

I have the honor to inform you, that, on the 19th instant, off Cape Palos, the squadron under my

command captured an Algerine brig of twenty-two guns and one hundred and eighty men. After a chase of three hours, she ran into shoal water, where I did not think it advisable to follow with our large ships, but despatched the Epervier, Spark, Torch, and Spitfire, to which she surrendered after a short resistance. Twenty-three men were found dead on board. We received from her eighty prisoners, the residue of her crew having left her in boats. Many of them must have been killed by the fire of our vessels, and one of the boats was sunk. None of our vessels sustained any damage, nor was there a man killed or wounded. This brig is larger than the Epervier, was built in Algiers five years ago, by a Spanish constructor, the same who built the frigate captured on the 17th instant, and is perfectly sound.

I have the honor to be, &c.

STEPHEN DECATUR.

Joint Letter of Stephen Decatur and William Shaler, as Commissioners to conclude a Peace with Algiers, to Mr. Monroe, Secretary of State, accompanying a Treaty signed by the Dey of Algiers, on the 30th of June, 1815.

United States Ship Guerriere.
Bay of Algiers, July 4th, 1815.

SIR,

We have the honor to refer you to the official reports of Commodore Decatur to the navy department, for an account of the operations of this squadron previous to our arrival off Algiers, on the 28th ultimo.

Having received information that the Algerine squadron had been at sea for a considerable time longer

than that to which their cruises usually extend, and that a despatch boat had been sent from Gibraltar to Algiers, to inform them of our arrival in the Mediterranean, we thought that they might have made a harbor where they would be in safety. We, therefore, whilst they were in this state of uncertainty, believed it a proper moment to deliver the President's letter, agreeably to our instructions.

Accordingly, on the 29th ultimo, a flag of truce was hoisted on board the Guerriere, with the Swedish flag at the main. A boat came off about noon, with Mr. Norderling, Consul of Sweden, and the captain of the port, who confirmed the intelligence we had before received, and to whom we communicated information of the capture of their frigate and brig.

The impression made by these events was visible and deep. We were requested by the captain of the port (Mr. Norderling declaring he was not authorized to act) to state the conditions on which we would make peace; to which we replied by giving the letter of the President to the Dey, and by a note from us to him; a copy of which we have the honor to transmit herewith.

The captain of the port then requested, that hostilities should cease pending the negotiation, and that persons authorized to treat should go on shore; he and Mr. Norderling both affirming, that the minister of marine had pledged himself for our security and return to our ships when we pleased.

Both these propositions were rejected, and they were explicitly informed that the negotiation must be carried on on board the fleet, and that hostilities, as far as they respected vessels, could not cease. They returned on shore.

On the following day, the same persons returned, and informed us that they were commissioned by the Dey to treat with us on the proposed basis, and their anxiety appeared extreme to conclude the peace immediately. We then brought forth the model of a treaty, which we declared would not be departed from in substance; at the same time declaring, that, although the United States would never stipulate for paying tribute under any form whatever, yet that they were a magnanimous and generous nation, who would, upon the presentation of consuls, do what was customary with other great nations in their friendly intercourse with Algiers. The treaty was then examined, and they were of opinion, that it would not be agreed to in its present form, and particularly requested that the article requiring the restitution of the property they had captured, and which had been distributed, might be expunged; alleging that such a demand had never before been made upon Algiers. To this it was answered, that the claim was just, and would be adhered to. They then asked whether, if the treaty should be signed by the Dey, we would engage to restore the captured vessels; which we refused. They then represented that it was not the present Dey, who had declared the war, which they acknowledged to be unjust; conceding that they were wholly in the wrong, and had no excuse whatever; requesting, however, that we would take the case of the Dey into consideration, and, upon his agreeing to terms with us, more favorable than had ever been made with any other nation, restore the ships, which they stated would be of little or no value to us, but would be of great importance to him, as they would satisfy the people with

the conditions of the peace we were going to conclude with him.

We consulted upon this question, and determined that, considering the state of those vessels, the sums that would be required to fit them for a passage to the United States, and the little probability of selling them in this part of the world, we would make a compliment of them to his Highness, in the state they then were; the Commodore engaging to furnish them with an escort to this port. This, however, would depend upon their signing the treaty as presented to them, and could not appear as an article of it, but must be considered as a favor conferred on the Dey by the United States.

They then requested a truce, to deliberate upon the terms of the proposed treaty, which was refused; they even pleaded for three hours. The reply was, "Not a minute. If your squadron appears in sight before the treaty is actually signed by the Dey, and the prisoners sent off, ours will capture them." It was finally agreed that hostilities should cease, when we perceived their boat coming off with a white flag hoisted, the Swedish Consul pledging his word of honor not to hoist it unless the treaty was signed, and the prisoners in the boat. They returned on shore, and, although the distance was full five miles, they came back within three hours, with the treaty signed as we had concluded it, and the prisoners.

During the interval of their absence, a corvette appeared in sight, which would have been captured if they had been detained one hour longer. The treaty has since been drawn out anew, translated by them, and duly executed by the Dey; which we have the honor to transmit herewith.

Mr. Shaler has since been on shore, and the cotton and money, mentioned in the fourth article, have been given up to him. They now show every disposition to maintain a sincere peace with us, which is, doubtless, owing to the dread of our arms; and we take this occasion to remark, that, in our opinion, the only secure guaranty we can have for the maintenance of the peace just concluded with these people is, the presence in the Mediterranean of a respectable naval force.

As this treaty appears to us to secure every interest within the contemplation of the government, and as it really places the United States on higher grounds than any other nation, we have no hesitation, on our part, in fulfilling such of its provisions as are within our power, in the firm belief that it will receive the ratification of the President and Senate.

We have the honor to be, &c.

STEPHEN DECATUR.
WILLIAM SHALER.

The American Commissioners to the Dey of Algiers.

The undersigned have the honor to inform his Highness the Dey of Algiers, that they have been appointed, by the President of the United States of America, commissioners plenipotentiary to treat of peace with his Highness; and that, pursuant to their instructions, they are ready to open a negotiation for the restoration of peace and harmony between the two countries, on terms just and honorable to both parties; and they feel it incumbent on them to state, explicitly, to his Highness, that they are instructed to treat

upon no other principle than that of perfect equality, and on the terms of the most favored nations. No stipulation for paying any tribute to Algiers, under any form whatever, will be agreed to.

The undersigned have the honor to transmit, herewith, a letter from the President of the United States; and they avail themselves of this occasion to assure his Highness of their high consideration and profound respect.

STEPHEN DECATUR.
WILLIAM SHALER.

To the Honorable Benjamin W. Crowninshield, Secretary of the Navy.

United States Ship Guerriere.
Bay of Tunis, July 31st, 1815.

SIR,

I have the honor to inform you, that, upon my arrival at this anchorage, I was made acquainted with the following transactions, which had taken place here during our late war with Great Britain.

Two prizes, which had been taken by the Abellino privateer, and sent into this port, were taken possession of by a British vessel of war, while lying within the protection of the Bey of Tunis. The Consul having communicated to me information of this violation of our treaty with Tunis, I demanded satisfaction of the Bey. After some hesitation, and proposing a delay of payment for one year, my demand was acceded to, and the money, amounting to forty-six thousand dollars, was paid into the hands of the Consul, Mr. Noah, agent for the privateer.

I shall proceed immediately for Tripoli, and will give

you early information of the further proceedings of the squadron. The Bey of Tunis has now lying in this harbor, nearly ready for sea, three frigates and several small vessels of war.

I have the honor to be, &c.

STEPHEN DECATUR.

Extract of a Letter from Commodore Decatur, dated at Messina, August 31st, 1815.

I have the honor to inform you, that, immediately after the date of my last communication, I proceeded to Tripoli. Upon my arrival off that place, I received from our Consul a letter; in consequence of the information contained in that letter, I deemed it necessary to demand justice from the Bashaw. On the next day, the Governor of Tripoli came on board the Guerriere to treat in behalf of the Bashaw. He objected to the amount claimed by us, but finally agreed to our demands. The money, amounting to the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars, has been paid into the hands of the Consul, who is agent for the privateer. The Bashaw also delivered up to me ten captives, two of them Danes, and the others Neapolitans.

During the progress of our negotiations with the States of Barbary, now brought to a conclusion, there has appeared a disposition, on the part of each of them, to grant as far as we were disposed to demand. I trust that the successful result of our small expedition, so honorable to our country, will induce other nations to follow the example; in which case the Barbary States will be compelled to abandon their piratical system.

I shall now proceed with the squadron to Carthagena, at which place I hope to find the relief squadron from America.

No. IX.

Report on the Defence of the Chesapeake Bay, and on a Naval Depot in its Waters.

To the Honorable Benjamin W. Crowninshield, Secretary of the Navy.

Navy Commissioners' Office, January 2d, 1817.

Sir,

In obedience to your call of the 16th ultimo on the navy commissioners, requiring a report of the late examination and survey made under their direction, in pursuance of your instructions of the 7th of May, I enclose you a statement of such facts as I have been enabled to collect upon this important subject. From the diversity of opinion, which we have found to exist between us upon this important subject, we have deemed it most satisfactory to give in separate reports. This diversity was, perhaps, to have been expected, in a case presenting so wide a range for observation; and I trust we shall not be considered as too tenacious of our individual opinions, when it is recollected that this question involves the safety of the navy, and the protection of the extensive shores of the Chesapeake.

The first examination required by your order of the 7th is, to ascertain the most proper mode of defend-

ing the Chesapeake in time of war. In giving my opinion upon this head, I beg leave to be understood as disclaiming all knowledge of the expense of constructing fortifications; for particular estimates of which, I beg leave to refer you to Lieutenant-Colonel Bomford, of the engineers, who accompanied us on this survey.

The Chesapeake Bay can be defended from a superior hostile fleet only by fortifications sunk at some point in the channel; and the point nearest the ocean, susceptible of defence, is obviously the most proper. The channel of the bay at the capes, navigable for ships of a large class, is four and three quarters miles wide; depth of water generally from ten to fifteen fathoms. The sea, at this point, being uninterrupted by shoals, in its roll from the Atlantic, would, in my opinion, render fortifications utterly impracticable. Ascending the bay from the capes, the channel branches at the Horseshoe, one branch passing into Hampton Roads, the other leading up the bay itself. The branch of the channel, which leads up to Hampton Roads, passes between two shoals. That on the south side, called Willoughby's, and distant from Old Point about two and a quarter miles, has eight feet water on it. The one on the north side is called the *Thimbles;* is distant from Old Point about three miles; has nine feet of water on it. They are about a geographical mile distant from each other.

The other branch of the channel, that which passes up the bay, has a width between the Horseshoe and the middle ground of four miles, and the depth of water, for three fourths of this distance, does not exceed four fathoms and a half, being nowhere more than eight fathoms. The bottom, from a number of

experiments, appears to be a solid and closely compacted sand, protected from the heavy sea of the Atlantic by the shoal of the middle ground, which stretches many miles to sea, and on which its violence is expended before it reaches this channel. If the Chesapeake be susceptible of defence at all, it is my opinion this is the only point at which it can be defended; the channel, at every other place, above or below, being much wider, and of much greater depth; and that works judiciously constructed between the tail of the Horseshoe and the middle ground would be permanent, strong evidence is furnished by those extensive works, which form the harbor of Cherbourg; works constructed on a sand, unprotected by shoals without, where the sea is as violent, the tide infinitely stronger, and its perpendicular rise upwards of forty feet.

You will perceive, Sir, that, in considering the subject of defending the Chesapeake generally, I have included the defence of Hampton Roads, not only as an arm of the bay, nor on account of the objects of spoil to which the banks of its rivers invite an enemy, but with reference to the other inquiry of a naval depot, to which I shall presently call your attention. In relation to the defence of Hampton Roads particularly, if the defence of this place were the exclusive object, there is another position for the purpose, which would probably be preferable, which is Old Point Comfort, and the opposite shoal, called the *Rip Raps*, which are less than one mile distant. I beg leave to refer you to a report made upon the subject by Colonel Bomford, merely noticing, that I understand it was made out before it was discovered that the water on Willoughby's Shoal and the Thimbles was so shallow,

or that these shoals approached so near each other as they do.

I will now further add the authority of General Bernard's opinion, that any distance not exceeding one mile may be so fortified as to render it impassable.

If, in addition to powerful works placed at the entrance into Hampton Roads, we add that part of the naval force already contemplated, which will probably be stationed within the roads, (the only inducement a hostile fleet could have to attempt passing heavy batteries,) so moored as to aid in obstructing the enemy's passage, and sufficiently near to be sustained by the forts in the event of their passing, I do not believe it will be ever attempted. Let us suppose Hampton Roads thus fortified, and our naval depot, as well as our fleet, drawn within those defences; what inducement would remain to an enemy to attempt a passage up the bay? The destruction of our fleet and our depot would be their first object; their second would be to prevent our fleet from getting to sea. Either of these objects would keep them necessarily in the vicinity of the roads. The pillage of the shores of the Chesapeake and its waters would be the only remaining inducement for a cruise up the bay; an inducement too trifling to permit the belief, that they would abandon for it the important objects they would leave in the neighborhood of Hampton Roads, and more particularly when their passage up the bay is opposed by batteries, stretched across the channel of the Horseshoe and the middle ground, and with a fleet too in their rear, ready to act, in the event of their receiving such injury, as is more than probable they would receive, in passing such works. The non-existence of any object of sufficient

importance to invite an enemy up the bay, under the arrangements already stated, would render it unnecessary to have the works between the Horseshoe and the middle ground as numerous, or as strong, by one half, as would otherwise be required. And it is my opinion, that the bay and Hampton Roads are susceptible of permanent and complete defence, by works erected at the points proposed, and the same works be made to serve for the defence of both; whence the whole expense of fortifying the naval depot would be saved, as well as the expense of keeping up garrisons. What the expense of such works would be I am incapable of saying; but I am satisfied, that the cost to the nation of defending the shores of the Chesapeake for one single war, would greatly surpass what would be requisite to erect a permanent defence of the bay; and when we connect this with the debasement of permitting the enemy to make a home of our waters, the consideration of any warrantable expenditure can scarcely be thought to oppose an obstacle to the establishment of any works, which may be determined to be practicable.

I come now to the location of the naval depot; and on this point there are a few simple principles, which seem decisive of the inquiry. A naval depot should possess a sufficiency of water; it should be contiguous to the ocean, otherwise the navy could not render that prompt protection to the coast, which comprises the greater part of its utility. It should also be connected with the means of supplies of timber and naval stores, which no posture of a war could cut off or interrupt. These are qualities of the first necessity.

There are other advantages, not, indeed, so indispensable, but still of a very high character, and which it

would be extremely fortunate to find with the qualities of primary importance already mentioned; such, for example, as a populous neighborhood, from which supplies of labor and provisions might be commodiously drawn, and which would be at hand to give support to the depot, in the event of a sudden attack. Another of these incidental advantages is a large, safe, and well defended outer harbor, into which the ships, when built, could be drawn and manœuvred, without the hazard of exposure to a superior enemy.

Hampton Roads, which I consider the outer harbor of Norfolk, is eighteen miles from Cape Henry. Ships can enter or proceed to sea from it, with the wind from any quarter. It furnishes excellent anchorage, and has sufficient room for a fleet to manœuvre in, under sail; an advantage that no other harbor that I know of possesses. The distance of Hampton Roads from the navy yard at Gosport is twelve miles, and the shoalest water found in the river, at ordinary high tides, is twenty-five feet. This depth is more than sufficient for the seventy-fours we now have.

You will find, on the file in your office, that the pilotage paid for the Independence seventy-four, when she sailed for the Mediterranean, was twenty-four feet. The ships now building, although of greater capacity, will not draw so much by six inches.

The present defences of Norfolk are, in my opinion, sufficient to protect it against any naval force that can be brought against it. It will be recollected, that, during the late war, the enemy considered it absolutely necessary to get possession of Craney Island, before they could pass to Norfolk with their fleet. In consequence, a combined attack by their boats and a considerable land force was made on Craney Island. The

attack was repelled by a few pieces of cannon placed upon the sand; since which time, it has been regularly fortified.

All the approaches to Norfolk and the navy yard by land are interrupted by watercourses, and lead through swamps. Both places, with the exception of about two hundred yards, are insulated by creeks, unfordable by reason of deep mud.

These creeks can, and, I believe, have been connected by military works; nor is there any higher ground, than that on which they stand, within cannon range of either place.

It is the opinion of military men, who have commanded there, that they are particularly well situated for defence against an attack by land. From Craney Island up to the navy yard, which I consider the inner harbor, is six miles, in which thirty sail of the line may lie with perfect convenience; and it is at all times so smooth, as not to interrupt the ordinary work or repairs that may be required. From Norfolk to Hampton Roads large ships cannot sail when the wind is ahead, in consequence of the narrowness of the channel. But if warping anchors, with buoys, be laid down in the channel, (as is the case in all man-of-war harbors that are close,) ships can with any wind be warped into the roads. The harbors of Malta and Port Mahon, which are considered two of the best harbors in Europe, can only be left or entered, when the wind is adverse, by warping. The navy yard at Norfolk comprises within its walls a square of about twenty acres, one side of which lies upon the channel of the river, at which sixteen sail of the line can be laid up in ordinary, if they are brought to the pier end on, as is practised at the naval arsenal at Antwerp.

The navy yard, in its present state, furnishes as many conveniences for building, or fitting out, as any yard in the United States; two hundred thousand dollars, at least, having been already expended by the public in valuable improvements.

The neighborhood furnishes abundance of oak and pine timber suitable for naval purposes, and also naval stores, a supply of which cannot be cut off by a blockading enemy. The advantages it possesses in consequence of its vicinity to a commercial city would be considerable, both as it regards the numerous mechanics and seamen that are to be obtained there, and the protection that a large population would afford in the event of a sudden attack. The climate of Norfolk is, I presume, similar to that of the shores of the Chesapeake generally on tide water.

I will now proceed to the examination of York River.

From Cape Henry lighthouse to Gloucester town, which is the first point in York River that could be rendered sufficiently strong to prevent the passage of a hostile fleet, is thirty-two miles. Ships can enter or proceed to sea from it with all winds. The distance from Gloucester to the clay banks, the place contemplated for the navy yard, is seven miles; and the depth of water is sufficient for any ship at all times of tide. It can, unquestionably, be defended against any attack by water; it is at present entirely unprotected by any fortifications. From the best information I have been enabled to collect, I am induced to believe, that there are several rivers putting in from the bay, navigable for light craft and boats, and approaching within eight or nine miles of the clay banks, where a debarkation of troops might be effected. With the nature of the intervening grounds I am unacquainted.

The site selected as the best in this river for a naval depot forms, at present, part of the bed of the river; and no vessels drawing ten feet water can approach the bank nearer than a quarter of a mile. As the bottom is mud, it is probable that it will be found necessary to drive piles for the foundation of the navy yard; and the whole yard must of course be composed of artificial or made ground. There is a creek on each side of it, heading about half a mile in the rear, where they approach within about four hundred yards. At this point it is proposed placing the defences against a hostile attack. About eight hundred or a thousand yards to the right of this position, and the contemplated depot, there is an extensive range of heights, that overlook and command them, in consequence of which, I am of opinion, that this position cannot be defended from a land attack with a less force than would be competent to meet the assailants in the field. It is believed, that a supply of oak timber may be obtained from the shores of York River; but pine fit for naval purposes, and naval stores, must be drawn from a distance. A blockading force, in time of war, might prevent the transportation of them by water, the only means by which they could be obtained in any quantity. From the unusual straightness of York River, the mouth of which lies open to the bay, it is much more rough with particular winds, than rivers of its width generally are. With the wind blowing fresh up or down the river, I should apprehend that any repairs that would require working near the water would be interrupted. The inner harbor of this river, like that of Norfolk, cannot be left or entered when the wind is ahead, except by warping.

The next point embraced by your instructions is Tangier Islands, lying about one hundred miles up

the Chesapeake. From the survey and report of Captain Spence, the commissioners were of opinion that that place was totally unfit for a naval depot, and therefore did not proceed to examine it. For particular information respecting this place, I beg leave to refer you to Captain Spence's survey and report.

As your instructions did not particularize St. Mary's, and not being apprized that my colleagues intended to examine that place, I was not present when they did so. It lies on the upper side of the Potomac River, near its mouth, and about a hundred and twenty miles up the Chesapeake Bay.

I am unacquainted with the depth of water, the extent of the harbor, its susceptibility of defence against an attack by water, or the supply of naval stores and building materials in the vicinity. From my want of local knowledge of this place, I can say nothing as to its particular advantages, and can only point out some prominent objections, which present themselves. Its distance from the ocean I consider an insuperable objection to it as a naval depot and rendezvous, in consequence of the difficulty and detention our ships might meet with in going out or returning from sea. Another objection is, that the population, for a considerable distance, is so thin that it cannot afford sufficient succor in case of a sudden attack. The River Patuxent lies a few miles higher up the bay than the Potomac, and approaches, where it is navigable for vessels of the largest class, within a few miles of the rear of the harbor of St. Mary's. The harbor is everywhere surrounded, on the land side, by commanding heights, which are too numerous to be occupied and sustained, except by a large army; and therefore it would be necessary that a considerable land

force should be kept there at all times, to insure its safety. Another very important objection is, that, if the neighborhood does not afford sufficient supplies of timber, which, I believe, is the case, they might be cut off, in time of war, by a blockading force. This place, as well as the harbors of Norfolk and York, from the narrowness of its channel, can only be left or entered, when the wind is adverse, by warping. Its climate is very similar to the climate of those places. There is an objection common to both York and St. Mary's, as the places of naval deposit, which has not yet been mentioned; and that is, that they both lie within the defences proposed to be raised from the Horseshoe to the middle ground. If you present to an enemy the combined attractions of your depot and your fleet, those works for the defence of the bay must be more numerous and strong, and consequently much more expensive; and it is for this, among other reasons, that I think it so much preferable to place both these objects behind the defences proposed to be established at the mouth of Hampton Roads.

Having weighed all the advantages and disadvantages of these several positions, it is my decided opinion, that the present navy yard at Norfolk (independent of the protection it would afford the Chesapeake) is in all respects incomparably the best place for a naval depot, if Hampton Roads be properly fortified; and in that case, I should consider it the finest harbor I have ever seen. The only objection to it, in its present state, is the mud bar at the mouth of the river, over which our largest ships cannot pass at *low water*, which is a sufficient objection in the present unprotected state of Hampton Roads; inasmuch as any of our larger ships, chased into the roads by a superior

naval force at *dead low water*, could not pass the bar at the mouth of the river, and would, of course, be exposed to attack. The expense of the requisite buildings for a naval depot, at either of the other places, together with the fortifications necessary for the protection of them by land and by water, would, in my opinion, be much greater than would be sufficient to fortify Hampton Roads completely. Should either of the other places be fortified, they would require a much larger force to garrison them, and would render no material aid in the general defence of the Chesapeake. Permit me further to observe, Sir, that it is the unanimous opinion of the Board, that the waters of the Chesapeake should, at some point or other, be the place of a naval depot and rendezvous. The mildness of the climate enabling the workmen to continue their labor throughout almost the whole of the year, and the geographical situation of the place, seem to me to fit it eminently for this purpose.

It is near the centre of our coast, and of our commerce; and that portion of the navy, which would be stationed there, would possess thereby a facility in defending both by the rapid movements it would be enabled to make. And I have no hesitation in expressing the opinion, that, by raising the fortifications, which I have proposed, and placing the depot near the ocean, the Chesapeake, at present the most vulnerable part of the coast, would become one of the strongest. It would become itself a defence to our seaboard.

The subjoined sketch of the waters in the vicinity of the Chesapeake was furnished me, at a few hours' notice, by Mr. Adams, of the United States navy, who made the survey of the Chesapeake under the direction of the commissioners. The well known talents and

precision of this gentleman leave no doubt of the accuracy of his lines of bearing, distance, and soundings. You will perceive, Sir, that I have drawn my facts relative to those points from this document.

I have the honor to be, &c.

STEPHEN DECATUR.

No. X.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN COMMODORE JAMES BARRON AND COMMODORE STEPHEN DECATUR.

Commodore Barron to Commodore Decatur.

Hampton, Virginia, June 12th, 1819.

SIR,

I HAVE been informed in Norfolk, that you have said that you could insult me with impunity, or words to that effect. If you have said so, you will, no doubt, avow it, and I shall expect to hear from you.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JAMES BARRON.

Commodore Decatur to Commodore Barron.

Washington, June 17th, 1819.

SIR,

I have received your communication of the 12th instant. Before you could have been entitled to the information you have asked of me, you should have given up the name of your informer. That frankness which ought to characterize our profession required

it. I shall not, however, refuse to answer you on that account, but shall be as candid in my communication to you, as your letter or the case will warrant.

Whatever I may have *thought, or said, in the very frequent and free conversations I have had respecting you and your conduct*, I feel a thorough conviction, that I never could have been guilty of so much egotism as to say, that "I could insult you" (or any other man) "with impunity."

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

STEPHEN DECATUR.

Commodore Barron to Commodore Decatur.

Hampton, Virginia, June 25th, 1819.

SIR,

Your communication of the 17th instant, in answer to mine of the 12th, I have received.

The circumstances that urged me to call on you for the information requested in my letter would, I presume, have instigated you, or any other person, to the same conduct that I pursued. Several gentlemen in Norfolk, not your enemies, nor actuated by any malicious motive, told me, that such a report was in circulation, but could not now be traced to its origin. I therefore concluded to appeal to you, supposing, under such circumstances, that I could not outrage any rule of decorum or candor. This, I trust, will be considered as a just motive for the course I have pursued. Your declaration, if I understand it correctly, relieves my mind from the apprehension, that you had so degraded my character, as I had been induced to allege.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JAMES BARRON.

Commodore Decatur to Commodore Barron.

Washington, June 29th, 1819.

SIR,

I have received your communication of the 25th, in answer to mine of the 17th; and as you have expressed yourself doubtfully, as to your correct understanding of my letter of the aforesaid date, I have now to state, and I request you to understand distinctly, that I meant no more than to disclaim the *specific* and *particular* expression, to which your inquiry was directed, to wit, that I had said that I could insult you with impunity. As to the motives of the "several gentlemen in Norfolk," your informants, or the rumors "which cannot be traced to their origin," on which their information was founded, or who they are, it is a matter of perfect indifference to me, as are also your motives in making such an inquiry upon such information.

Your obedient servant,

STEPHEN DECATUR.

Commodore Barron to Commodore Decatur.

Hampton, October 23d, 1819.

SIR,

I had supposed that the measure of your ambition was nearly completed, and that your good fortune had rendered your reputation for acts of magnanimity too dear to be risked wantonly on occasions, that never can redound to the honor of him that would be great. I had also concluded that your rancor towards me was fully satisfied, by the cruel and

unmerited sentence passed upon me by the court, of which you were a member; and, after an exile from my country, family, and friends, of nearly seven years, I had concluded that I should now be allowed, at least, to enjoy that solace with this society, that lacerated feelings like mine required, and that you would have suffered me to remain in quiet possession of those enjoyments. But scarcely had I set my foot on my native soil, ere I learned that the same malignant spirit, which had before influenced you to endeavor to ruin my reputation, was still at work, and that you were ungenerously traducing my character whenever an occasion occurred which suited your views, and, in many instances, not much to your credit as an officer, through the medium of our juniors. Such conduct cannot fail to produce an injurious effect on the discipline and subordination of the navy. A report of this sort, Sir, coming from the respectable and creditable sources it did, could not fail to arrest my attention, and to excite those feelings, which might naturally be expected to arise in the heart of every man, who professes to entertain principles of honor, and intends to act in conformity with them.

With such feelings, I addressed a letter to you, under date of the 12th of June last, which produced a correspondence between us, which, I have since been informed, you have endeavored to use to my further injury, by sending it to Norfolk, by a respectable officer of the navy, to be shown to some of my particular friends, with a view of alienating from me their attachment. I am also informed, that you have tauntingly and boastingly observed, that you would cheerfully meet me in the field, and hoped I would yet act like a man, or that you had used words to that effect.

Such conduct, Sir, on the part of any one, but especially one occupying the influential station under the government which you hold, towards an individual situated as I am, and oppressed as I have been, and that chiefly by your means, is unbecoming you as an officer and a gentleman, and shows a want of magnanimity, which, hostile as I have found you to be towards me, I had hoped, for your own reputation, you possessed. It calls loudly for redress at your hands. I consider you as having given the invitation, which I accept, and will prepare to meet you at such time and place, as our respective friends, hereafter to be named, shall designate. I also, under all the circumstances of the case, consider myself entitled to the choice of weapons, place, and distance; but, should a difference of opinion be entertained by our friends, I flatter myself, from your known personal courage, that you would disdain any unfair advantage, which your superiority in the use of the pistol, and the natural defect in my vision, increased by age, would give you. I will thank you not to put your name on the cover of your answer, as, I presume, you can have no disposition to give unnecessary pain to the females of my family.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JAMES BARRON.

Commodore Decatur to Commodore Barron.

Washington, October 31st, 1819.

SIR,

Your letter of the 23d instant has been duly received. Prior to giving it that reply which I intend,

its contents suggest the necessity of referring to our June correspondence.

On the 12th of June last, you addressed to me a note, inquiring whether I had said, that "I could insult you with impunity." On the 17th of June, I wrote to you, in reply, as follows; "Whatever I may have *thought, or said, in the very frequent and free conversations I have had respecting you and your conduct,* I feel a thorough conviction, that I never could have been guilty of so much egotism, as to say that I could insult you, (or any other man,) with impunity."

On the 25th of June, you again wrote to me, and stated, that the report on which you had grounded your query of the 12th of June "could not now be traced to its origin," and your letter is concluded by the following words; "Your declaration, if I understand it correctly, relieves my mind from the apprehension, that you had so degraded my character, as I had been induced to allege." Immediately on receiving your letter of the 25th of June, I wrote to you, on the 29th of June, as follows; "As you have expressed yourself doubtfully, as to your correct understanding of my letter of the 17th of June, I have now to state, I request you to understand distinctly, that I meant *no more* than to disclaim the *specific* and *particular* expression, to which your inquiry was directed, to wit, that I had said, 'I could insult you with impunity.'" Here ended our June correspondence, and with it all kind of communication, till the date of your letter of the 23d instant, which I shall now proceed to notice.

Nearly four months having elapsed since the date of our last correspondence, your letter was unexpected to me, particularly as the terms used by you in the conclusion of your letter to me of the 25th of June,

and your silence since receiving my letter of the 29th of June, indicated, as I thought, satisfaction on your part. But it seems that you consider yourself aggrieved by my sending our June correspondence to Norfolk. I did not send the June correspondence to Norfolk, until three months had expired after your last communication, and not then until I had been informed, by a captain of the navy, that a female of your acquaintance had stated, that such a correspondence had taken place. If that correspondence has, in any degree, "alienated your friends from you," such effect is to be attributed to the correspondence itself. I thought the papers would speak for themselves, and sent them without written comment.

With respect to the court-martial upon you, for the affair of the Chesapeake, to which you have been pleased to refer, I shall not treat the officers, who composed that court, with so much disrespect, as to attempt a vindication of their proceedings. The chief magistrate of the country approved them; the nation approved them; and the sentence has been carried into effect. But, Sir, there is a part of my conduct, on that occasion, which it does not appear irrelevant to revive in your recollection. It is this. I was present at the court of inquiry upon you, and heard the evidence then adduced for and against you; thence I drew an opinion altogether unfavorable to you; and when I was called upon, by the Secretary of the Navy, to act as a member of the court-martial ordered for your trial, I begged to be excused the duty, on the ground of my having formed such an opinion. The honorable Secretary was pleased to insist on my serving. Still anxious to be relieved from this service, I did, prior to taking my seat as a member of the court,

communicate to your able advocate, General Taylor, the opinion I had formed, and my correspondence with the navy department upon the subject, in order to afford you an opportunity, should you deem it expedient, to protest against my being a member, on the ground of my not only having formed, but expressed, an opinion unfavorable to you. You did not protest against my being a member. Duty constrained me, however unpleasant it was, to take my seat as a member. I did so, and discharged the duty imposed on me. You, I find, are incapable of estimating the motives, which guided my conduct in this transaction.

For my conduct, as a member of that court-martial, I do not consider myself as, in any way, accountable to *you*. But, Sir, you have thought fit to deduce, from your impressions of my conduct as a member of that court-martial, inferences of personal hostility towards you. Influenced by feelings thence arising, you commenced the June correspondence, a correspondence which I had hoped would have terminated our communications.

Between you and myself there never has been a personal difference; but I have entertained, and do still entertain, the opinion, that your conduct as an officer, since the affair of the Chesapeake, has been such as ought to forever bar your readmission into the service.

In my letter to you of the 17th of June, although I disavowed the *particular expressions* to which you invited my attention, candor required that I should apprize you, that I had not been silent respecting you. I informed you that I had had *very frequent and free conversations respecting you and your conduct;* and the words were underscored, that they might not fail

to attract your particular attention. Had you asked what those frequent and free conversations were, I should, with the same frankness, have told you; but, instead of making a demand of this kind, you reply to my letter of the 17th of June, "that my declaration, if correctly understood by you, relieved your mind," &c. That you might correctly understand what I did mean, I addressed you, as before observed, on the 29th of June, and endeavored, by underscoring certain precise terms, to convey to you my precise meaning. To this last letter I never received any reply.

Under these circumstances, I have judged it expedient, at this time, to state, as distinctly as may be in my power, the facts upon which I ground the unfavorable opinion which I entertain, and have expressed, of your conduct as an officer, since the court-martial upon you, while I disclaim all personal enmity towards you.

Some time after you had been suspended from the service, for your conduct in the affair of the Chesapeake, you proceeded, in a merchant brig, to Pernambuco; and by a communication from the late Captain Lewis, whose honor and veracity were never yet questioned, it appears, that you stated to Mr. Lyon, the *British Consul* at Pernambuco, with whom you lived, "that, if the Chesapeake had been prepared for action, you would not have resisted the attack of the Leopard; assigning as a reason, that you knew (as did also our government) there were deserters on board your ship; that the President of the United States knew there were deserters on board, and of the intention of the British to take them; and that the President caused you to go out in a defenceless state, for the express purpose of having your ship at-

tacked and disgraced, and thus attain his favorite object of involving the United States in a war with Great Britain." For confirmation of this information, Captain Lewis refers to Mr. Thomas Goodwin, of Baltimore, the brother of Captain Ridgely, of the navy, who received it from Mr. Lyon himself. Reference was made to Mr. Goodwin, who, in an official communication, confirmed all that Captain Lewis had said. The veracity and respectability of Mr. Goodwin are also beyond question. You will be enabled to judge of the impression made upon Captain Lewis's mind by the following strong remarks he made on the subject.

"I am now convinced that Barron is a traitor; for I can call by no other name a man, who would talk in this way to an Englishman, and an Englishman in office."

These communications are now in the archives of the navy department.

If, Sir, the affair of the Chesapeake excited the indignant feelings of the nation towards Great Britain, and was, as every one admits, one of the principal causes which produced the late war, did it not behoove you to take an active part in the war, for your own sake, patriotism out of the question?

But, Sir, instead of finding you in the foremost ranks, on an occasion which so emphatically demanded your best exertions, it is said, and is credited, that you were, after the commencement of the war, to be found in command of a vessel sailing under *British license!* Though urged, by your *friends*, to avail yourself of some one of the opportunities, which were every day occurring, in privateers, or other fast sailing merchant vessels, sailing from France, and other places,

to return to your country during the war, it is not known that you manifested a disposition to do so, excepting in the single instance by the *cartel* John Adams, in which vessel, you must have known, you could not be permitted to return, without violating her character as a cartel.

You say you have been oppressed. You know, Sir, that, by absenting yourself, as you did for years, from the country, without leave from the government, you subjected yourself to be stricken from the rolls. You know, also, that by the tenth article of the act for the better government of the navy, all persons in the navy holding intercourse with an enemy become subject to the severest punishment known to our laws. You have not for the offence before stated, to my knowledge, received even a reprimand; and I do know, that your pay, even during your absence, has been continued to you.

As to my having spoken of you injuriously to "junior officers," I have to remark, that such is the state of our service, that we have but few seniors. If I speak with officers at all, the probability is, it will be with a junior.

On your return to this country, your efforts to re-establish yourself in the service were known, and became a subject of conversation with officers, as well as others. In the many and *free* conversations I have had respecting you and your conduct, I have said, for the causes above enumerated, that, in my opinion, you ought not to be received again into the naval service; that there was not employment for all the officers, who had faithfully discharged their duty to their country in the hour of trial; and that it would be doing an act of injustice to employ you, to the

exclusion of any one of them. In speaking thus, and in endeavoring to prevent your readmission, I conceive I was performing a duty I owe to the service; that I was contributing to the preservation of its respectability. Had you made no effort to be reëmployed, after the war, it is more than probable I might not have spoken of you. If you continue your efforts, I shall certainly, from the same feelings of public duty, by which I have hitherto been actuated, be constrained to continue the expression of my opinions; and I can assure you, that, in the interchange of opinions with other officers respecting you, I have never met with more than one, who did not entirely concur with me.

The objects of your communication of the 23d, as expressed by you, now claim my notice. You profess to consider me as having given you "an invitation." You say that you have been told, that I have "tauntingly and boastingly observed, that I would cheerfully meet you in the field, and hoped you would yet act like a man."

One would naturally have supposed, that, after having so recently been led into error by "rumors," which could not be traced, you would have received with some caution subsequent rumors; at all events, that you would have endeavored to trace them, before again venturing to act upon them as if they were true. Had you pursued this course, you would have discovered, that the latter rumors were equally unfounded as the former.

I never invited you to the field; nor have I expressed a hope that you would call me out. I was informed by a gentleman with whom you had conferred upon the subject, that you left Norfolk for this place, some time before our June correspondence,

with the intention of calling me out. I then stated to that gentleman, as I have to all others, with whom I have conversed upon the subject, that, if you made the call, I would meet you; but that, on all scores, I should be much better pleased to have nothing to do with you. I do not think that fighting duels, under any circumstances, can raise the reputation of any man, and have long since discovered, that it is not even an unerring criterion of personal courage. I should regret the necessity of fighting with any man; but, in my opinion, the man who makes *arms his profession* is not at liberty to decline an invitation from any person, who is not so far degraded, as to be beneath his notice. Having incautiously said I would meet you, I will not consider this to be your case, although many think so; and if I had not pledged myself, I might reconsider the case.

As to "weapons, place, and distance," if we are to meet, those points will, as is usual, be committed to the friend I may select on the occasion. As far, however, as it may be left to me, not having any particular prejudice in favor of any particular arm, distance, or mode, (but on the contrary disliking them all,) I should not be found fastidious on those points, but should be rather disposed to yield you any little advantage of this kind. As to my skill in the use of the pistol, it exists more in your imagination, than in reality. For the last twenty years I have had but little practice, and the disparity in our ages, to which you have been pleased to refer, is, I believe, not more than five or six years. It would have been out of the common course of nature, if the vision of either of us had been improved by years.

From your manner of proceeding, it appears to me,

that you have come to the determination to fight some one, and that you have selected me for that purpose; and I must take leave to observe, that your object would have been better attained, had you made this decision during our late war, when your fighting might have benefited your country, as well as yourself. The style of your communication, and the matter, did not deserve so dispassionate and historical a notice as I have given it; and had I believed it would receive no other inspection than yours, I should have spared myself the trouble. The course I adopted with our former correspondence, I shall pursue with this, if I shall deem it expedient.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

STEPHEN DECATUR.

W. Carter to Commodore Decatur.

Norfolk, August 24th, 1819.

MY DEAR COMMODORE,

Nothing had transpired, previous to my arrival, on the subject of the correspondence; but a lady, a Miss Black, I think her name is, from Hampton, has stated, that a correspondence had taken place between you and B., which, she feared, would end in a meeting. The fears of this lady are at direct variance with the opinion of your friends here, who think that he does not purpose saying more on the subject.

As it seems that it was known at Hampton, and even here, that letters had passed between you and B., may I venture to ask you to send a copy of them to Mr. Tazewell, whom I have just left? He will, with great pleasure, he says, attend to your wishes.

Receive the best wishes of your friend,

W. CARTER.

Commodore Decatur to Commodore Barron.

Washington, November 5th, 1819.

SIR,

Since my communication to you of the 31st ultimo, I have been informed by a gentleman entitled to the fullest credit, that you were not afloat till after the peace; consequently, the report which I noticed of your having sailed under British license must be unfounded.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

STEPHEN DECATUR.

Commodore Barron to Commodore Decatur.

Hampton, November 20th, 1819.

SIR,

Unavoidable interruption has prevented my answering your two last communications as early as it was my wish to have done; but in a few days you shall have my reply.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JAMES BARRON.

Commodore Barron to Commodore Decatur.

Hampton, November 30th, 1819.

SIR,

I did not receive until Tuesday, the 9th instant, your very lengthy, elaborate, and historical reply, without date, to my letter to you of the 23d ultimo; which, from its nature and *object*, did not, I conceive,

require that you should have entered so much into detail, in defence of the hostile and unmanly course you have pursued towards me, since the "affair of the Chesapeake," as you term it. A much more laconic answer would have served my purpose, which, for the present, is nothing more than to obtain at your hands honorable redress for the accumulated insults which you, Sir, in particular, above all my enemies, have attempted to heap upon me, in every shape in which they could be offered. Your last voluminous letter is *alone* sufficient proof, if none other existed, of the rancorous disposition you entertain towards me, and the extent to which you have carried it. That letter I should no otherwise notice, than merely to inform you it had reached me, and that I am prepared to meet you in the field, upon *anything* like fair and equal grounds; but inasmuch as you have intimated that our correspondence is to go before the public, I feel it a duty I owe to myself, and to the world, to reply particularly to the many calumnious charges and aspersions, with which your "*dispassionate* and historical notice" of my communication so abundantly teems; wishing you, Sir, at the same time, "distinctly to understand," that it is not for you alone, or to justify myself in your estimation, that I take this course.

You have dwelt much upon our "June correspondence," as you style it, and have made many quotations from it. I deem it unnecessary, however, to advert to it, further than to remark, that, although "nearly four months" did intervene between that correspondence and my letter of the 23d ultimo, my silence arose not from any misapprehension of the purport of your contumacious "*underscored*" remarks, nor from the malicious designs they indicated, nor from a tame disposi-

tion to yield quietly to the operation, which either might have against me; but from a tedious and painful indisposition, which confined me to my bed the chief part of that period, as is well known to almost every person here. I anticipated, however, from what I had found you capable of doing to my injury, the use to which you would endeavor to pervert that correspondence, and have not at all been disappointed. So soon as I was well enough, and heard of your machinations against me, I lost no time in addressing to you my letter of the 23d ultimo; your reply to which I have now more particularly to notice. I have not said, nor did I mean to convey such an idea, nor will my letter bear the interpretation, that your forwarding to Norfolk our "June correspondence" had, in any degree, "alienated my friends from me," but that it was sent down there with *that view.*

It is a source of great consolation to me, Sir, to know, that I have more friends, both in and out of the navy, than you are aware of; and that it is not in your power, great as you may imagine your official influence to be, to deprive me of their good opinion and affection. As to the reason which seems to have prompted you to send that correspondence to Norfolk, "that a female of my acquaintance had stated, that such a one had taken place," I will only remark, that she did not derive her information from me; that it has always been, and ever will be, with me, a principle, to touch as delicately as possible upon reports said to come from *females*, *intended* to affect injuriously the character of any one; and that, in a correspondence like the *present*, highly as I estimate the sex, I should never think of introducing *them* as authority. Females, Sir, have nothing, or ought to have nothing,

to do in controversies of this kind. In speaking of the court-martial which sat upon my trial, I have cast no imputation or reflection upon the members, individually, who composed it, (saving yourself,) which required that you should attempt a vindication of their proceedings, champion as you are, and hostile as some of them may have been to me; nor does the language of my letter warrant any such inference.

I merely meant to point out to you, Sir, what you appear to have been incapable of perceiving, the indelicacy of your conduct, (to say the least of it,) in hunting me out as an object for malignant persecution, after having acted as one of my judges, and giving your voice in favor of a sentence against me, which, I cannot avoid repeating, was "cruel and unmerited." It is the privilege, Sir, of a man deeply injured as I have been by that decision, and conscious of his not deserving it, as I feel myself, to remonstrate against it; and I have taken the liberty to exercise that privilege.

You say, that "the proceedings of the court have been approved by the chief magistrate of our country, that the nation approved of them, and that the sentence has been carried into effect." It is true, the President of the United States *did* approve of that sentence, and that it was carried into effect; full and complete effect, which I should have supposed ought to have glutted the envious and vengeful disposition of your heart; but I deny that the nation has approved of that sentence, and, as an appeal appears likely to be made to *them*, I am willing to submit the question. The part you took on that occasion, it was totally unnecessary, I assure you, "to revive in my recollection;" it is indelibly imprinted on my mind, and can never, while I have life, be erased. You acknowledge you

were present at the court of inquiry in my case, "heard the evidence for and against me, and had, therefore, formed and expressed an opinion unfavorable to me;" and yet your conscience was made of such pliable materials, that *because* the then "honorable Secretary was *pleased to insist* on your serving as a member of the court-martial, and because I did not protest against it," you conceive that "*duty constrained* you, however unpleasant, to take your seat as a member," although you were to act under the solemn sanction of an oath, to render me impartial justice, upon the very testimony which had been delivered in your hearing, before the court of inquiry, and from which you "drew an opinion altogether unfavorable to me."

How such conduct can be reconciled with the principles of common honor and justice, is to me inexplicable. Under such circumstances, no consideration, no power or authority on earth, could, or ought to have forced any liberal, high minded man to sit in a case, which he had prejudged; and, to retort upon you your own expressions, you must have been "incapable of seeing the glaring impropriety of your conduct, for which, although you do not conceive yourself in any way, accountable to me," I hope you will be able to account for it with your God and your conscience.

You say, between you and myself there never has been a personal difference, "and you disclaim all personal enmity towards me." If every step you have taken, every word you have uttered, and every line you have written in relation to me; if your own admission of the very frequent and free conversations you have had respecting me and my conduct, "since the affair of the Chesapeake," bear not the plainest stamp of personal *hostility*, I know not the meaning

of such terms. Were you not under the influence of feelings of this sort, why not, in your official capacity, call me, or have me brought before a proper tribunal, to answer the charges you have preferred against me, and thereby give me a chance of defending myself? Why speak injuriously of me to *junior* officers, "which you do not deny"? Why the "many frequent and free conversations respecting me and my conduct," which you have taken so much pains to underscore? Why use the insulting expression, that you "entertained, and still do entertain, the opinion that my conduct, as an officer, since that affair, has been such, as ought forever to bar my readmission into the service"? and that, in endeavoring to prevent it, "you conceive you were performing a duty you owe to the service, and were contributing to its respectability"? Why the *threat*, that, if I continued the efforts *you* say I have been making to be "reëmployed," you "certainly should be constrained to continue the expressions of those opinions"?

Does not all this, together with the whole tenor and tendency of your letter, manifest the most marked *personal* animosity against me, which an honorable man, acting under a sense of public duty, by which you profess to "have been hitherto actuated," would disdain even to show, much more to feel?

I shall, now, Sir, take up the specific charges you have alleged against me, and shall notice them in the order in which they stand. The first is one of a very *heinous* character. It is that "I proceeded in a merchant brig to Pernambuco." Could I, Sir, during the period of my suspension, have gone any where in a national vessel? Could I, with what was due to my family, have remained idle? The sentence of the court

deprived them of the principal means of subsistence. I was therefore compelled to resort to that description of employment with which I was best acquainted; and on this subject *you* should have been silent. But you add, that the late Captain Lewis, of the navy, *who had* it from Mr. Goodwin, who heard it from Mr. Lyon, the British Consul at Pernambuco, with whom you undertake to say I lived, represented me as stating, "that if the Chesapeake had been prepared for action, I would not have resisted the attack of the Leopard; assigning as a reason, that I knew, as also did our government, that there were deserters on board the Chesapeake; and that I said to Mr. Lyon, further, that the President of the United States knew there were deserters on board, and of the intention of the British ship to take them, and that the ship was ordered out, under these circumstances, with a view to bring about a contest, which might embroil the two nations in a war."

The whole of this, Sir, I pronounce to be a falsehood, a ridiculous, malicious, absurd, improbable falsehood, which can never be credited by any man that does not feel a disposition to impress on the opinion of the public that I am an idiot. That I should, two years after the affair of the Chesapeake, make such a declaration, when every proof that could be required of a contrary disposition on the part of the chief magistrate had been given, cannot receive credit from any one, but those that are disposed to consider me such a character as you would represent me to be. I did not live with Mr. Lyon, nor did I ever hold a conversation with him so indelicate as the one stated in Captain Lewis's letter would have been. And with what object could I have made such a communication?

Mr. Lyon would naturally have felt contempt for a man, that would have suffered himself to have been made a tool of, in so disgraceful an affair. I found Mr. Lyon transacting business in Pernambuco. He produced to me a letter from Mr. Hill, the American Consul in that country, recommending him as entitled to the confidence of his countrymen, every one of whom, in that port, put their business into his hands. I did the same, and thus commenced our acquaintance. He was kind and friendly to me, but never in any respect indelicate, as would have been, in a high degree, such conversation between us.

Of Mr. Goodwin I know nothing. I have never seen him in all my life; nor do I conceive that his hearsay evidence can be of any kind of consequence against me. I was the first that informed the President and the Secretary of the Navy, that such a letter was in the department, even before I had seen it. And again, if the mere oral testimony of a British agent was to be considered as evidence sufficient to arraign an American officer, I think the navy would be quickly in such a state, as it might be desirable for their nation to place it in. As to the *impressions* made upon the mind of Captain Lewis, from this *information*, and the "*strong remarks*" he made upon the subject, which you have thought proper to quote, they by no means establish the *correctness* of that information, but only go to show the effect it produced upon the mind of an individual, who seems to have imbibed a prejudice against me, not otherwise to be accounted for, except your acquaintance with him. He is now in his grave, and I am perfectly disposed *there* to let him rest. You must, however, have been hard pressed, indeed, to be compelled to resort to

such flimsy grounds as those, a degree weaker than even second-handed testimony, to support your charges against me.

These communications, you observe, are now in the archives of the navy department. Of this fact, Sir, I had been long apprized; and had you, when searching the records of that department for documents to injure my character, looked a little further back, you would perhaps have found others calculated to produce a very different effect. Of my desire to return to the United States, during the late war, there are certificates in the navy department of the first respectability, which, if you had been disposed to find and quote, are perhaps lying on the same shelf from whence you took those that you appear so anxious to bring to public view; I mean my letter applying for service, as soon as an opportunity offered, after the term of my suspension expired; and one letter, above all, *you* should not have passed over unnoticed, that which you received from my hand, of May, 1803, addressed to the Secretary of the Navy, which was one of the principal causes of your obtaining the first command that you were ever honored with; and as you may have forgotten it, I will remind you, on this occasion, that, but little more than one month previous to the date of that letter, I, by my advice and arguments, saved you from resigning the service of your country in a pet, because you were removed from the first lieutenancy of the New York to that of second of the Chesapeake. But all this, and much more, is now forgotten by you; yet there are others that recollect those circumstances, and the history of your conduct to me will outlive you, let my fate be what it may.

The affair of the Chesapeake did certainly "excite,"

and ought to have excited, the indignant feelings of the nation towards Great Britain; but however it may have justified a declaration of war against that power, it was not, as you assert "every one admits," one of the principal causes of the late war. That did not take place, Sir, until *five years* after, when that affair had been amicably, and of course honorably, adjusted between the two nations. I mention this fact, not on account of its importance, but because you laid so much stress upon that "affair," as a reason why I ought to have returned home during the late war, and to show, that, although it *did* happen to be your fortunate lot to have an opportunity of being in the foremost rank on that occasion, of which you seem inclined to vaunt, you are ignorant even of the causes which led to it.

Having, in your letter of the 5th instant, abandoned the charge of my having sailed under "British license," after the commencement of the late war, in consequence of information received by you, from a gentleman entitled to the fullest credit, that I was not afloat until after the peace, consequently the report which you noticed, of my having sailed under British license, must be unfounded; I have only to remark, on this head, that, in advancing a charge against me of so serious a nature, and designed, and so well calculated as it was to affect materially my reputation, not only as an officer of the navy, but as a citizen of the United States, you should first have ascertained that it was founded on *fact*, and not on rumor, which you so much *harp* upon; and that, upon a proper investigation, you would have discovered your other accusations to be equally groundless.

For my not returning home during the late war, I

do not hold myself, to use your own expressions, "in any way accountable to you," Sir. It would be for the government, I should suppose, to take notice of my absence, if they deemed it reprehensible; and they, no doubt, would have done so, had not the circumstances of the case, in their estimation, justified it. That they are perfectly satisfied upon this point I have good reason to believe, and trust I shall be able to satisfy my country also. The President's personal conduct to me, and the memorial of the Virginia delegation in Congress to him, prove how I stand with those high characters, your opinion notwithstanding to the contrary. I deny, Sir, that I ever was "urged" by my friends, as you in mockery term them, to return home, during the late war; nor could it have been requisite for me to have been "urged" to do so by any one. Laying patriotism out of the question, as you observe, as well as the reasons why you think "it behooves me" to adopt that course, there were other incentives strong enough, God knows, to excite a desire on my part to return; and I should have returned, Sir, but for circumstances beyond my control, which it is not incumbent on me to explain to *you*.

Had the many opportunities really presented themselves, which you allege were "every day occurring," of which I might have availed myself to return to my country, in privateers or other fast sailing merchant vessels, from France and other places, but of which you produce no other proof than random assertion, on which most of your other charges rest? There were no such opportunities as you say were "every day occurring;" no, not one within my reach; and some considerable time after the news of the war arrived in Denmark, it was not believed that it would con-

tinue six months; but, if I had received the slightest intimation from the department, that I should have been employed on my return, I should have considered no sacrifice too great, no exertion within my power should have been omitted, to obtain so desirable an object, as any mark of my country's confidence would have been to me in such a moment. A gunboat, under my own orders, would not have been refused. But what hope had I, when my letter of application for service was not even honored by an answer? In regard to the John Adams, I do not deem it proper, on this occasion, to explain my reasons for making the attempt to return in that ship; but whenever I am called on by any person properly authorized to make the inquiry, I am confident that I shall convince him, that I had good reason to believe that I should obtain a passage in her, notwithstanding your great knowledge on the occasion.

You say, by absenting myself, *for years*, from the country, without leave from the government, I "subjected myself to be stricken from the rolls." I knew also, by the tenth article of the act for the better government of the navy, that all persons in the navy, holding intercourse with an enemy, became subject to the severest punishment known to the law; and that for these offences, as you are pleased to term them, "I have not received, to your knowledge, even a reprimand;" but I presume, if I have not, it is not your fault. What kind and humane forbearance is this, after what I have already endured! But, Sir, as you seem to be so very intelligent upon other points, pray tell me, where was the necessity of my asking for a furlough until the period of my suspension expired, or even after having reported myself for duty, without

being noticed? As to the charge of my holding intercourse with the enemy, I am at a loss to conceive to what you allude, and should degrade myself by giving it any other reply, than to pronounce it, if you mean to insinuate there was any unlawful or improper communication on my part with the government or any individual of Great Britain, as a *false* and *foul* aspersion on my character, which no conduct or circumstance of my life, however it might be tortured by your malice or ingenuity, can, in any manner, justify or support.

You say, also, that you *do know* "that my pay, even during my absence, *was continued to me.*" It is not the fact, Sir. I never, and until very recently since my return, received but half pay. This part of your letter I should not have regarded, were it not to show with what boldness, facility, and *sang froid*, you can make assertions unsustained by the shadow of truth; but if you had made yourself acquainted with the circumstances relative to my *half pay*, you would have found that not one cent of it was received by me. The government was so good as to pay the amount to my unfortunate female family, whose kindest entertainment you have frequently enjoyed.

Poor, unfortunate children! whose ancestors, every man of them, did contribute every disposable shilling of their property, many of them their lives, and all of them their best exertions, to establish the independence of their country, should now be told that the small amount of my half pay was considered, by an officer of high rank, too much for them! You have been good enough to inform me, that, on my return to this country, my "*efforts*," as you have been pleased to call them, "to reinstate myself in the service, were known,

and became a subject of conversation with officers, as well as others," and but for those "*efforts*," it is *more than probable* you would not have *spoken of me.*

This would, indeed, have displayed a wonderful degree of lenity and courtesy on your part, of which I could not have failed to be duly sensible. But, Sir, I beg leave to ask how, and where, did you get your information, that such "efforts" were made by me; and even admit they were, why should you *alone*, disclaiming, as you pretend to do, all "*personal enmity*" against me, have made yourself so *particularly busy* on the occasion? Was it because your inflated pride led you to believe, that the weight of your influence was greater than that of any other officer of the navy, or that you were more tenacious of its honor and "respectability," than the rest of the officers were? You assure me, however, "that, in the interchange of opinion with other officers respecting me, you have never met with more than one, who did not entirely concur with you in the opinion you have expressed of me." Indeed! and what is the reason? It is because, I suppose, you are most commonly attended by a train of dependants, who, to enjoy the sunshine of your favor, act as *caterers* for your vanity, and, revolving round you like *satellites*, borrow their chief consequence from the countenance you may *condescend* to bestow upon them.

You, at length, arrive at the main point; the object of my letter of the 23d ultimo, which you might have reached by a much *shorter route*, and have saved me the fatigue of being compelled, in self-defence, to travel with you so far as you have gone. The language of defiance, represented to have been used by you, "that you would cheerfully meet me in the field, and hoped

I would yet act like a man," is disavowed by you. And you further deny having ever invited me to the field, or expressed a hope I would call you out; but you observe that, "being informed by a gentleman with whom I had *conferred* upon the subject, that I left Norfolk, for the seat of government, some time before our June correspondence, with the intention of calling you out, you stated to that gentleman, as you have to *all others* with whom you have conversed upon the subject, that if I made the call, you would meet me; but that, upon all scores, you would be much better pleased to have nothing to do with me."

I certainly do not exactly know who that intermeddling gentleman was, with whom you say I "conferred;" but if I may be allowed a conjecture, I think I can recognize in him the self-same officious *gentleman*, who, I am creditably informed, originated the report of your having made use of the gasconading expressions you have disowned. In this respect I may be mistaken. Be this, however, as it may, I never gave him, or any other person, to understand that my visit to Washington, last spring, was for the purpose of "calling you out;" nor *did* I go there with *any such view*.

How you can reconcile your affected indifference towards me, in the remark "that on all scores you would be much better pleased to have nothing to do with me," with the very active part, it is generally known, and which your own letter clearly evinces, you have taken against me, I am at a loss to conceive. No, Sir, you feel not so much unconcern as you pretend, and wish it to be believed you do, in regard to the course of conduct my honor and my injuries may, in my judgment, require me to pursue. You have a

motive, not to be concealed from the world, for all you have done or said, or for any future endeavors you may make, to bar my "readmission" into the service. It is true that you have never given me a direct, formal, and written invitation to meet you in the field, such as one gentleman of honor *ought* to send to another. But if your own admissions, that you had "incautiously said you would meet me if I wished it," and "that if you had not *pledged yourself*, you might reconsider the subject," and all this, too, without any provocation on my part, or the most distant intimation from me that I had a desire to meet you, do not amount to a challenge, I cannot comprehend the object or import of such declarations, made, as they were, in the face of the world, and to those, in particular, who you knew would not only communicate them to me, but give them circulation. Under all the circumstances of the case, I consider you as having thrown down the gauntlet, and I have no hesitation in accepting it. This is, however, a point which it will not be for me or you to decide; nor do I view it as of any other importance, than as respects the privilege allowed to the challenged party in relation to the choice of weapons, distance, &c., about which I feel not more "fastidious," I assure you, Sir, than you do; nor do I claim any advantage whatever, which I have no right to insist upon. Could I stoop so low as to solicit any, I know you too well to believe you would have any inclination to concede them. All I demand is, to be placed upon equal grounds with you; such as two honorable men may decide upon as *just and proper*.

Upon the subject of duelling I perfectly coincide

with the opinions you have expressed. I consider it as a barbarous practice, which ought to be exploded from civilized society. But, Sir, there may be causes of such extraordinary and aggravated insult and injury, received by an individual, as to render an appeal to arms, on his part, absolutely necessary. Mine I conceive to be a case of that description; and I feel myself constrained, by every tie that binds me to society, by all that can make life desirable to me, to resort to this mode of obtaining that redress due to me at your hands, as the only alternative which now seems to present itself for the preservation of my honor.

To conclude. You say, "From my manner of proceeding, it appears to you that I have come to the determination to fight some one, and that I have selected you for that purpose." To say nothing of the vanity you display, and the importance you seem to attach to yourself, in thus intimating, that, being resolved to *fight myself* into favor, I could no otherwise do so than by fixing upon you, the very reverse of which you infer is the fact, I never wished to fight in this way; and had you permitted me to remain at rest, I should not have disturbed *you;* I should have pursued the "even tenor of my way," without regarding you at all. But this would not have suited your ambitious views. You have *hunted* me out; have persecuted me with all the power and influence of your office, and have declared your determination to drive me from the navy, if I should make any "efforts" to be employed; and for what purpose, or from what other motive than to obtain my rank, I know not. If my life will give it you, you shall have an opportunity of obtaining it. And now, Sir, I have only to add, that if you will make known your determination, and the

name of your friend, I will give that of mine, in order to complete the necessary arrangements to a final close of this affair.

I can make no other apology for the apparent tardiness of this communication, than merely to state, that, being on very familiar terms with my family, out of tenderness to their feelings, I have written under great restraint.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JAMES BARRON.

Commodore Decatur to Commodore Barron.

Washington, December 29th, 1819.

SIR,

Your communication of the 30th ultimo reached me as I was on the eve of my departure for the north; whence I did not return until the 22d instant. It was my determination, on the receipt of your letter, not to notice it; but upon more mature reflection, I conceive, that as I have suffered myself to be drawn into this unprofitable discussion, I ought not to leave the false coloring and calumnies, which you have introduced into your letter, unanswered. You state that a much more laconic reply to your letter of the 23d of October would have served your purpose. Of this I have no doubt; and to have insured such an answer, you had only to make a laconic call. I had already informed you of the course I had felt myself bound to pursue respecting you, and of the reasons which induced my conduct, and that, if you require it, I would overcome my own disinclination, and fight you. Instead of calling me out for injuries, which you chose to insist

that I have heaped upon you, *you* have thought fit to enter upon this war of words.

I reiterated to you, that I have not challenged, nor do I intend to challenge you. I do not consider it essential to my reputation that I should notice anything which may come from you, the more particularly, when you declare your sole object, in wishing to draw the challenge from me, is, that you may avail yourself of the advantages which rest with the challenged. It is evident that you think, or your friends for you, that a fight will help you; but, in fighting, you wish to incur the least possible risk. Now, Sir, not believing that a fight of this nature will raise me at all in public estimation, but may even have a contrary effect, I do not feel at all disposed to remove the difficulties that lie in our way. If we fight, it must be of your seeking; and you must take all the risk and all the inconvenience, which usually attend the challenger in such cases.

You deny having made the communication to the British Consul at Pernambuco, which Captain Lewis and Mr. Goodwin have represented. The man capable of making such a communication would not hesitate in denying it; and, until you can bring forward some testimony, other than your own, you ought not to expect that the testimony of those gentlemen will be discredited. As to the veracity of the British Consul, I can prove, if necessary, that you have yourself vouched for that.

You offer, as your excuse for not returning to your country, during our war with England, that you had not been invited home by the then Secretary, notwithstanding you had written him, expressive of your wishes to be employed. You state, that, if you "had received

the slightest intimation from the department, that you would have been employed on your return, you would have considered no sacrifice too great, no exertion within your power should have been omitted, to obtain so desirable an object." From this I would infer, that, in consequence of not receiving this intimation, you did not make the exertions in your power to return; and this I hold to be an insufficient excuse. You do not appear to have made any attempt, except by the way of the cartel, the John Adams. You cannot believe, that reporting yourself to the department, at the distance of four thousand miles, when the same conveyance which brought your letter would have brought youself, will be received as evincing sufficient zeal to join the arms of your country; and, besides, you say it was not believed, for a considerable time after the news of war arrived in Denmark, that it would last six months.

With those impressions, you must have known, that it would have occupied at least that time for your letter to have arrived at the department, you to receive an answer, and then repair to America. You deny that the opportunities of returning were frequent. The custom-house entries at Baltimore and New York alone, from the single port of Bourdeaux, will show nearly a hundred arrivals; and it is well known, that it required only a few days to perform the journey from Copenhagen to Bourdeaux, by the ordinary course of post. You deny having been advised to return to this country, by your friends, during the war. Mr. Cook, of Norfolk, your relative, says he wrote to you to that effect; and Mr. Forbes, then our Consul at Copenhagen, who is now at this place, says he urged you in person to do so.

You have charged the officers, who concur with me in opinion respecting your claims to service, as being my satellites. I think I am not mistaken, when I inform you, that all the officers of our grade, your superiors as well as inferiors, with the exception of one, who is your junior, concur in the opinion, that you ought not to be employed again, whilst the imputations, which now lie against you, remain; nor have they been less backward than myself in expressing their opinions.

Your charge of my wishing to obtain your rank will apply to all, who are your juniors, with as much force as to myself. You never have interfered with me in the service, and, at the risk of being esteemed by you a little vain, I must say, I do not think you ever will. Were I disposed to kill out of my way, as you have been pleased to insinuate, those who interfere with my advancement, there are others, my superiors, whom I consider fairly barring my pretensions; and it would serve such purpose better to begin with them. You say, you were the means of obtaining me the first command I ever had in the service. I deny it. I feel that I owe my standing in the service to my own exertions only.

Your statement, that your advice prevented me from resigning on a former occasion, is equally unfounded. I have never, since my first admission into the navy, contemplated resigning; and instead of being ordered, as you state, from the first lieutenancy of the New York to the second of the Chesapeake, Commodore Chauncey, who was then flag captain, can testify, that I was solicited to remain as first lieutenant of the flagship; and I should have remained as such, had it not been for the demand which the government of Malta

made for the delivery of the persons, who had been concerned in the affair of honor, which led to the death of a British officer. It was deemed necessary to send all the persons, implicated in that affair out of the way; and I went home in the Chesapeake as a passenger.

You have been pleased to allude to my having received the hospitality of your family. The only time I recollect being at your house was on my arrival from the Mediterranean, in the Congress, fourteen years past. You came on board, and dined with me, and invited the Tunisian Ambassador and myself to spend the evening with you at Hampton. I accepted your invitation. Your having now reminded me of it tends very much towards removing the weight of obligation I might otherwise have felt on this score.

You speak of the good conduct of your ancestors. As your own conduct is under discussion, and not theirs, I cannot see how their former good character can serve at all your present purpose. Fortunately for our country, every man stands upon his own merit.

You state that the "Virginia delegation in Congress" had presented a memorial in your favor. I would infer from this, that all, or the greater part of the Virginia delegation, had interposed in your behalf. This, Sir, is not the fact. A few of them, I am informed, did take an interest in your case; but, being informed of the charges existing against you, of which they were before unapprized, they did not press further your claims. From the knowledge I have of the high-minded gentlemen that compose the Virginia delegation, if they would take the trouble to examine your case, I should, for my own part, be entirely satisfied to place the honor of the service upon their decision.

You offer, as your excuse for permitting four months to intervene between our June correspondence, (with which, from your letter, you appeared to be satisfied,) and your letter of the 23d of October, your indisposition. I am authorized in saying, that, for the greater part of the four months, you were out attending to your usual occupations.

Your offering your life to me would be quite affecting, and might (as you evidently intend) excite sympathy, if it were not ridiculous. It will not be lost sight of, that your jeopardizing your life depends upon yourself, and not upon me; and is done with a view of fighting your own character up. I have now to inform you, that I shall pay no further attention to any communication you may make to me, other than a direct call to the field.

Your obedient servant,

STEPHEN DECATUR.

Commodore Barron to Commodore Decatur.

Norfolk, January 16th, 1820.

SIR,

Your letter of the 29th ultimo I have received. In it you say that you have now to inform me, that you shall pay no further attention to any communication that I may make to you, other than a direct call to the field; in answer to which, I have only to reply, that whenever you will consent to meet me on fair and equal grounds, that is, such as two honorable men may consider just and proper, you are at liberty to view this as that call. The whole tenor of your conduct to me justifies this course of proceeding on my part. As for your charges and remarks, I regard

them not; particularly your sympathy. You know not such a feeling. I cannot be suspected of making the attempt to excite it.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

JAMES BARRON.

Commodore Decatur to Commodore Barron.

Washington, January 24th, 1820.

SIR,

I have received your communication of the 16th, and am at a loss to know what your intention is. If you intend it as a challenge, I accept it, and refer you to my friend Commodore Bainbridge, who is fully authorized by me to make any arrangement he pleases, as regards weapons, mode, or distance.

Your obedient servant,

STEPHEN DECATUR.

Commodore Barron to Commodore Decatur.

Norfolk, February 6th, 1820.

SIR,

Your letter of the 29th of December found me confined to bed, with a violent bilious fever; and it was eight days after its arrival before I was able to read it. The fever, however, about that time left me, and my convalescence appeared to promise a moderately quick recovery. I therefore wrote you my note of the 16th ultimo. In two days after, I relapsed, and have had a most violent attack, which has reduced me very low; but as soon as I am in a situation to write, you shall hear from me to the point.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JAMES BARRON.

CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO THE SAME SUBJECT, COPIED FROM THE PAPERS OF COMMODORE DECATUR, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE FIRST LETTER, COPIED FROM THE ORIGINAL AMONG COMMODORE BAINBRIDGE'S PAPERS.

Commodore Decatur to Commodore Bainbridge.

Washington, February 10th, 1820.

DEAR BAINBRIDGE,

I have received yours of the 6th. I regret that this tedious and troublesome business of mine should deprive you of the pleasure of visiting your friends.

The place we are to meet at is entirely at our option. Their convenience will not be consulted. My preference to some point near this arises from the inconvenience of a man's lying wounded at a distance from his own house; and as both of us cannot be indulged in being near our homes, I should not like to yield to them this point, unless you should find it inconvenient to come thus far. I leave you entirely the choice of weapons and distance, as also the time. I beg, however, unless it will inconvenience you very much, that Bladensburg, near the city of Washington, may be the point of meeting.

Yours sincerely,

STEPHEN DECATUR.

Commodore Bainbridge to Commodore Decatur.

St. Mary's, February 20th, 1820.

DEAR DECATUR,

I have received your letter of the 10th instant. I shall comply with your request, as to the place of

meeting. In serving a friend, and particularly one I so sincerely esteem as I do you, inconvenience to myself will not be considered by me. As yet, I have not heard from them.

God bless you. Your friend,

WILLIAM BAINBRIDGE.

Commodore Bainbridge to Commodore Decatur.

St. Mary's, February 27th, 1820.

DEAR DECATUR,

I hereunto annex a copy of a letter I have this moment received from Captain Elliot, and my answer to it. I hope the arrangements may be settled before the ship leaves here, which I expect will be in ten days.

Yours, sincerely,

WILLIAM BAINBRIDGE.

Captain J. D. Elliot to Commodore Bainbridge.

Norfolk, February 20th, 1820.

SIR,

On my arrival, a few days since, from the north, Commodore James Barron put in my hands, for perusal, a series of letters which had passed between him and Commodore Decatur, and at the same time solicited my friendly aid in bringing this matter to a final conclusion. The two accompanying letters, copies of which are herewith enclosed, make it only necessary that you should inform me when and where you will meet me, for the purpose of settling definitively the grounds on which they are to close. Commodore Bar-

ron is at this moment under the influence of the effects of bilious fever, but will be enabled to move in a few days.

With great respect,

J. D. ELLIOT.

Commodore Bainbridge to Captain J. D. Elliot.

St. Mary's, February 27th, 1820.

SIR,

Your letter of the 20th instant has this moment reached me. As I am constantly on board the Columbus, I shall be ready, at any time, to receive you on board, to make the arrangements to which your letter alludes.

Very respectfully yours,

WILLIAM BAINBRIDGE.

Commodore Bainbridge to Commodore Decatur.

River Potomac, March 8th, 1820.

DEAR DECATUR,

From the enclosed copy of an agreement* between Captain Elliot and myself, you will learn the arrangement for settling your unpleasant business with Commodore Barron.

The place, weapons, distance, and mode were prescribed by me. I had intended to have left the mode unfixed, until on the point of meeting; but being pressed by Captain Elliot, under the authority of your letter, I thought it best to fix it, to avoid unfavorable suspicions

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* Printed in the text. See page 317.

against you, by not doing so. I therefore acted for you precisely as I would have acted for myself, on a similar occasion, and doubt not of meeting your approbation.

Captain Elliot dwelt much on Commodore Barron's defective sight; but that had no influence on my mind, for I had resolved, a month since, in my own mind, that the distance should be eight paces. I observed to Captain Elliot, that I presumed Commodore Barron's sight had not failed him since giving the challenge. Captain Elliot said, Barron had not and would not practise. I shall leave here so as to be in Washington by the 20th.

Very sincerely yours,

WILLIAM BAINBRIDGE.

Memorandum respecting the Meeting between Commodore Decatur and Commodore Barron.

Washington, Wednesday, March 22d, 1820.

This morning, agreeably to his request, I attended Commodore Bainbridge in a carriage to the Capitol Hill, where I ordered breakfast, at Beale's Hotel, for three persons. At the moment it was ready, Commodore Decatur, having walked from his own house, arrived, and partook of it with us. As soon as it was over, we proceeded in our carriage towards Bladensburg. At breakfast he mentioned that he had a paper with him, which he wished to sign, (meaning his will,) but that it required three witnesses, and, as it would not do to call in any person for that purpose, he would defer it until we arrived at the ground. He was quite cheerful, and did not appear to have any desire to take

the life of his antagonist; indeed, he declared that he should be very sorry to do so.

On arriving at a valley, half a mile short of Bladensburg, we halted, and found Captain Elliot standing in the road, on the brow of the hill beyond us. Commodore Bainbridge and myself walked up, and gave him the necessary information, when he returned to the village. In a short time, Commodore Barron, Captain Elliot, his second, and Mr. Latimer arrived on the ground, which was measured, (eight long strides,) and marked by Commodore Bainbridge, nearly north and south, and the seconds proceeded to load. Commodore Bainbridge won the choice of stands, and his friend chose that to the north, being a few inches lower than the other.

On taking their stands, Commodore Bainbridge told them to observe, that he should give the words quick, "*Present; one, two, three;*" and that they were not, at their peril, to fire before the word *one*, nor after the word *three*, was pronounced. Commodore Barron asked him if he had any objection to pronouncing the words as he intended to give them. He said that he had not, and did so.

Commodore Barron, about this moment, observed to his antagonist, that he hoped, on meeting in another world, they would be better friends than they had been in this; to which Commodore Decatur merely replied, "I have never been your enemy, Sir." Nothing further passed between them previous to firing. Soon after, Commodore Bainbridge cautioned them to be ready, crossed over to the left of his friend, and gave the words of command, precisely as before; and at the word *two*, they both fired, so nearly together that but one report was heard.

They both fell nearly at the same instant. Commodore Decatur was raised and supported a short distance, and sank down near to where Commodore Barron lay; and both of them appeared to think themselves mortally wounded. Commodore Barron declared, that every thing had been conducted in the most honorable manner, and told Commodore Decatur that he forgave him from the bottom of his heart. Soon after this, a number of gentlemen coming up, I went after our carriage, and assisted in getting him into it; when, leaving him under the care of several of his intimate friends, Commodore Bainbridge and myself left the ground, and, as before agreed upon, embarked on board the tender of the Columbus at the navy yard.

It is due to Commodore Bainbridge to observe, that he expressed his determination to lessen the danger to each, by giving the words quick, with a hope that both might miss, and that then their quarrel might be amicably settled.

SAMUEL HAMBLETON.

No. XI.

BURIAL PLACE OF DECATUR.

IN April of 1844, Mr. B. C. Wilcocks, of Philadelphia, addressed a letter to Mrs. Decatur, on behalf of the managers of the Woodlands Cemetery, on the banks of the Schuylkill, begging to be intrusted with the remains of Commodore Decatur, "as a sacred de-

posit," to be interred in the most beautiful spot in the grounds, and over which they proposed to erect "a monument not unworthy of his fame." Mrs. Decatur gratefully declined this request, in consequence of having heard her husband remark, some years before his death, when urged to take part in the management of the Congressional burying ground, near Washington, by the suggestion that it would probably receive his own remains, "that, if he were permitted to choose the place of his interment, it would be near the tomb of his parents, at the Church of St. Peter in Philadelphia." In fulfilment of this expressed desire of her husband, Mrs. Decatur had, soon after his death, requested the vestry of St. Peter's Church to reserve the spot, which he had himself designated to receive his remains, with a view to their removal when her own life should have terminated.

In June of 1844, soon after Mrs. Decatur had replied to Mr. Wilcocks's application, Mr. Francis Gurney Smith addressed Mrs. Decatur on behalf of the vestry of St. Peter's Church, and his fellow-citizens of Philadelphia generally, and requested her to allow the removal of her husband's remains to take place, as soon as the necessary arrangements for the purpose could be made. "It is our intention," he remarked, "to erect a monument over the ashes of our dear and lamented friend, that shall do honor to his memory, and be a lasting memorial of the high estimation in which his services to his country are held by his fellow-citizens." Mrs. Decatur, sensible of the advantage of intrusting this pious duty to the living companions and friends of her husband, rather than, in the possibility of their own removal by death, to strangers, not indeed to his character and fame, but to his person, has sac-

rificed her natural reluctance to their disturbance during her own life, and consented to a removal, which will soon doubtless be effected.

No. XII.

Inscription.

"Here lie the remains of Stephen Decatur, of the United States Navy, who departed this life in the city of Washington, on the twenty-second day of March, eighteen hundred and twenty, aged forty-one years.

"His public services are recorded in the annals of his country; his private virtues in the hearts of his friends, and above all in her heart, who was for fourteen years the happy partner of his life, and the delighted witness of his exalted worth, and who can with truth inscribe upon this tablet, that he possessed every virtue of which the human character is susceptible, and each carried to its highest perfection."

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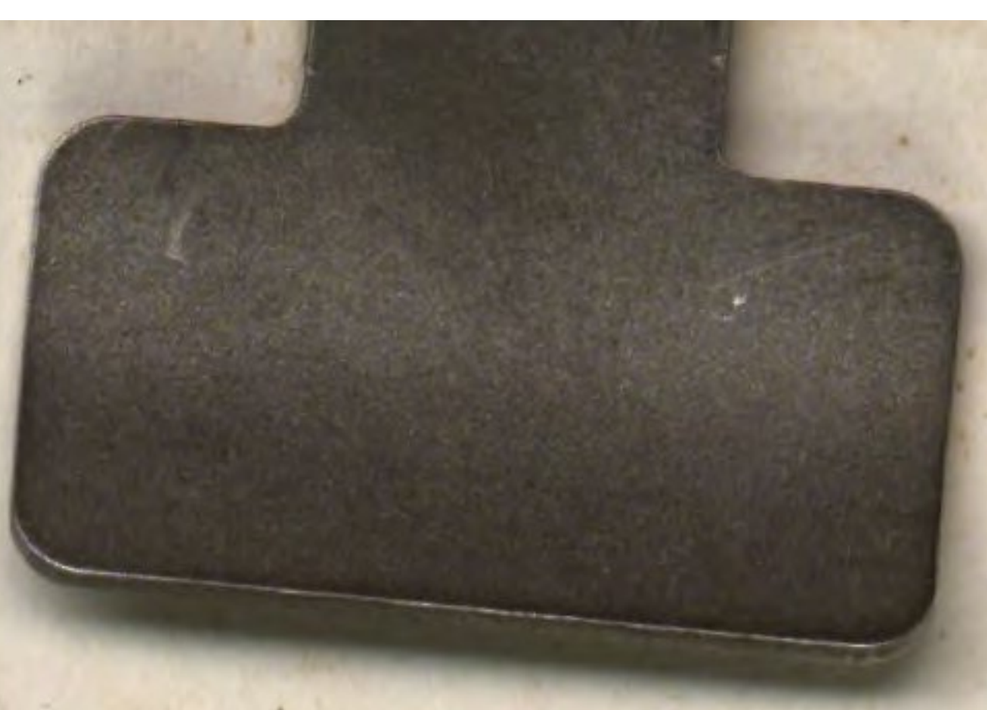

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Mackenzie, Alexander Slidell,

Life of Stephen Decatur, a Commodore in the Navy of the United States

Boston 1846

Biogr.c. 307 m,2-11
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